United Nations S/PV.7403

Security Council

Seventieth year

Provisional

7403rd meeting

Monday, 16 March 2015, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Delattre	(France)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	Chad	Mr. Mangaral
	Chile	Mr. Barros Melet
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Jordan	Mr. Hmoud
	Lithuania	Mrs. Jakubonė
	Malaysia	Mr. Haniff
	New Zealand	Mr. McLay
	Nigeria	Mrs. Ogwu
	Russian Federation	Mr. Safronkov
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Power
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Suárez Moreno

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2015/151)

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15-06968 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

Report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security (S/2015/151)

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of Afghanistan, Australia, Canada, Germany, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Italy, Japan, Pakistan, Slovakia, Sweden and Turkey to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, to participate this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2015/151, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security.

I now give the floor to Mr. Haysom.

Mr. Haysom: Recent avalanches and floods across Afghanistan, which caused over 250 fatalities, serve to remind us that the country is not only subject to the cost of human conflict but is also vulnerable to the regular toll exacted by natural disasters. The United Nations offers its condolences to the affected families and commends the response of the Government and humanitarian rescue workers, who have worked in the harshest of conditions to assist survivors and re-establish basic services. As requested by the Government, the United Nations humanitarian system has provided emergency relief and stands ready to deliver further assistance for longer-term reconstruction.

Since my previous briefing to the Council (see S/PV.7347), a number of significant developments have brought about renewed hope for an active peace process in Afghanistan. In addition, the national unity Government has started to take shape, with the nomination and approval of a number of ministers. And Afghanistan and Pakistan have conducted an increasingly constructive dialogue focused on peace, trade and security. Those positive developments are a testament to the efforts of President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah. Their collaborative leadership remains essential for any peace talks to progress, for comprehensive electoral reforms to take hold and for the implementation of the changes required to reinvigorate the economy.

To that effect, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) once again urges political leaders to conclude the appointment process of senior Government officials. In particular, the Mission highlights the need to appoint senior judicial officials to strengthen recent efforts to reinforce the rule of law and to fight against corruption. UNAMA continues to stress that a diverse and professional Administration with strong female representation will be necessary to tackle the many challenges that lie ahead.

In past weeks, reports on possible peace talks between the Government of Afghanistan and the Taliban have been prevalent. It is UNAMA's assessment that there is currently an alignment of circumstances that could be conducive to fostering peace talks. However, the parties need to be given sufficient space to build a level of trust that will allow them to establish common ground, to come to the realization that peace is the only viable option for Afghanistan and that a military victory is neither likely nor optimal for a lasting national social compact. Peace processes are fragile and vulnerable to external destabilization. They require patient nurturing. International support should be coherent and coordinated. Sustainable peace will require that the process be inclusive and build upon the significant gains made by Afghanistan in the past decade. In close consultation with the Government, UNAMA will continue to engage all parties to this conflict in order to assist them find that common ground.

I can also confirm that UNAMA continues a frank dialogue with the Taliban on humanitarian access and on human rights, notably on the protection of civilians. In that regard, the Mission notes that, as a result, access

for immunization teams in Helmand province has been restored.

An integral component of the political agreement that led to the formation of the national unity Government is the pledge made to establish an electoral reform commission. Comprehensive electoral reforms will be essential to restoring the faith of the Afghan people in the democratic process and in strengthening political stability. UNAMA therefore welcomes President Ghani's renewed commitment to establish the Commission shortly. We strongly encourage Afghan authorities to clarify the electoral calendar, improve fraud-mitigation measures, enhance the sustainability of elections and engage the Afghan people in a transparent and consultative manner.

In the past months, I have undertaken a number of visits to Afghanistan's neighbouring countries and met with senior officials, inter alia from Iran, Pakistan and Uzbekistan. I am pleased to report that, in each of those meetings, many interlocutors recognized the importance of enhancing regional collaboration. They affirmed their readiness to play a constructive role in Afghanistan and appreciated that stability and economic cooperation were ultimately a matter of mutual self-interest. In addition, a proper intra-Afghan peace dialogue will require strong regional backing, in full respect of Afghanistan's sovereignty. In that regard, we note the positive initiatives taken by the leaders of Afghanistan and Pakistan in recent months.

The state of the Afghan economy remains of significant concern. The Government's self-reliance agenda, presented at the London Conference in December, was rightly lauded for its vision. It now needs to be implemented to allow for the Government to further mobilize its revenues, increase its capacity to deliver services and create employment opportunities. Although the rain and snowfall of the past weeks have alleviated some of the concerns that Afghanistan could be affected by a debilitating drought this summer, preventive measures need to be put in place to assist the most vulnerable.

UNAMA has repeatedly stated its persistent concerns about the continued increase in civilian casualties. UNAMA documented more than 10,000 civilian casualties in 2014 — the highest annual number of civilian casualties recorded since UNAMA began systematic monitoring, in 2009. The rise in civilian casualties resulted mainly from increased ground engagements in which Afghan forces and insurgents use indirect fire in and on civilian populated areas. The parties to the conflict must understand the impact of their actions, take responsibility for them, uphold the values they claim to defend and make protecting civilians their priority. We need to see concrete steps towards a real reduction in civilian casualties in 2015.

In late February, together with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNAMA released its third report on torture and ill-treatment of conflict-related detainees in Government detention facilities. The report found that one third of all detainees interviewed were ill-treated or tortured. Although that shows a decrease from the 49 per cent in incidence of torture during the previous reporting period, more remains to be done to prevent torture, which is still pervasive and systemic. We welcome the new Administration's immediate commitment to end those practices, including its announcement to bring forward a national plan on the elimination of torture. UNAMA calls on the Government to send a clear message of zero tolerance for those practices by prosecuting perpetrators, and thereby putting an end to impunity.

Recent military operations in Helmand and Kunar provinces are a demonstration that the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have improved their planning and operational capacity. They are now in a position to conduct large-scale operations without direct combat assistance from international military forces. That development is encouraging, even though we expect to see an intensification of combat in the upcoming fighting season as insurgents seek to test the ANSF capacity to hold ground on its own.

Recent reports have indicated that the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) has established a foothold in Afghanistan. It is UNAMA's assessment that the group's presence is of concern but that ISIL's significance is not so much a function of its intrinsic capacities in the area or the region, but of its potential to offer an alternative flagpole around which otherwise isolated insurgent splinter groups can rally.

Noting the continuation of the Mission's core mandate, UNAMA will maintain its efforts, in a manner consistent with Afghan sovereignty, to provide good offices, promote human rights and promote coherent support by the international community for the priorities set by the Government of Afghanistan.

We stand ready to participate fully in the role of UNAMA, donors and the international community as Afghanistan enters the decade of transformation.

In less than a week, Afghans will celebrate Nowrooz, the day that in the region marks the beginning of the new year and that is widely recognized as an occasion signifying hope and renewal. I therefore take this opportunity to wish my colleague Ambassador Tanin and all Afghans a peaceful 1395. It is my most sincere hope that this will be the year that brings tangible progress towards peace.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Haysom for his briefing.

I now give the floor to the representative of Afghanistan.

Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan): I would like to thank France for its leadership of the Security Council this month and for convening this debate. I would also like to thank my esteemed friend Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his briefing, and the Secretary-General for his report on the situation in Afghanistan (S/2015/151). I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to Ambassador Oyarzun Marchesi and his team at the Permanent Mission of Spain for their hard work in facilitating the draft resolution on UNAMA's mandate and for their dedication as penholder on Afghanistan on the Security Council.

When the Security Council established UNAMA, in 2002, to assist the Government of Afghanistan and the Afghan people in laying the foundations for sustainable peace and development in the country, Afghanistan was in a fundamentally different situation than it is in today. At that time, the State was unable to function. The Government could barely provide services to the Afghan people. The country was almost bankrupt. Its national and international legitimacy had been eroded. Its institutions and its civil society were almost completely destroyed. Millions of Afghans had fled the country, and Afghanistan had lost most of its human capital.

The United Nations was instrumental in efforts to establish the Afghanistan we know today. From forging the Bonn Agreement in 2001, in the aftermath of the Taliban regime, and coordinating international civilian assistance over the past 10 years, to supporting presidential and parliamentary elections, the United Nations has supported Afghanistan's move from a prolonged period of internecine fighting and bloody civil wars to a new era of democracy and national unity.

As a result of our joint efforts, we have created new institutions and critical infrastructure, made unprecedented economic progress, built a capable and well-trained army and seen the flag of Afghanistan rise in the most remote parts of the country. Millions of Afghan refugees have returned home, and a new generation of educated Afghans has emerged to lead the country towards a brighter future.

There was tremendous progress and change in the past year in particular. Afghanistan completed its political and security transition in line with the goals set out at the Kabul, Bonn and Tokyo Conferences, and it is now embarking upon the transformation decade. In the summer of 2014, millions of Afghan women and men cast their votes in historic presidential elections, which marked the first-ever transition from one democratically elected President to another. At the end of 2014, the International Security Assistance Force mission ended and the new NATO Resolute Support Mission was established to provide training, advice and assistance to Afghanistan's national defence and security forces. Those forces are now fully responsible for the security of the country.

As we welcome the renewal of the mandate of UNAMA, it is important to note that today's Afghanistan is not comparable with the Afghanistan that UNAMA was established to support in 2002. It is even different from the situation upon which last year's mandate extension was based.

Afghanistan is gearing up to become a full partner to the community of democratic nations. As it does so, it is essential that the United Nations support to Afghanistan be consistent with the new realities on the ground and the goals of the transformation decade. It must fully reflect the principles of Afghan national sovereignty, national leadership and national ownership, the successful completion of the transition process and the initiation of the transformation decade. It must align precisely with the Government's national priorities. It must be effective, accountable and coherent. And it must reflect the fact that the Government of Afghanistan is ready to fully assume the leading managing and coordinating role over all

assistance and development programmes, as well as the international community's efforts in Afghanistan.

To that end, we welcome the Security Council's request that the Secretary-General initiate a process to conduct, within six months of the renewal of the mandate, a full examination of the role, structure and activities of all United Nations entities in Afghanistan, in full consultation and engagement with the Government of Afghanistan and key stakeholders, including the donor community, in the light of the completion of the transition and the beginning of the transformation decade and in accordance with the principles of Afghan national sovereignty, national leadership and national ownership.

While an initial review of the role and activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan took place at the request of the Government of Afghanistan in 2011, the process put forward in today's draft resolution will allow us to fully engage with all stakeholders over the next six months through a new, thorough and extensive mechanism that will refine the framework of our partnership and our relations with the United Nations in a new era.

The Government of Afghanistan is determined to do its part to build an Afghanistan that is ready to stand on its own feet, take full responsibility for its own affairs and assume its rightful place as a full and equal partner of the international community. To realize that vision, President Ashraf Ghani devised an agenda for reform entitled "Realizing Self-reliance", which was presented to the international community in London in December 2014. At the core of that agenda is a compact of stability and prosperity at the national, regional and international levels.

At the national level, the Government of Afghanistan is committed to enhancing our focus on the well-being of the citizen through concrete commitments, including eliminating corruption, tackling poverty, strengthening good governance and the rule of law, promoting human rights, including women's rights, and restoring fiscal stability and economic growth.

At the regional level, the Government of Afghanistan has embarked upon a new phase of engagement with our neighbours, the wider region and the Islamic world based on trust, cooperation and shared interests. Increased cooperation is essential not only to achieving lasting peace and stability in the country and the region, but also to enabling Afghanistan to become a hub for regional trade and integration and a land bridge of prosperity for all. To that end, the leadership of the country has engaged in a series of consultations and dialogues with neighbours and countries in the region to develop new and deepen existing trade, transit and energy links and to enhance cooperation and confidence-building measures.

At the international level, the new Government has reinvigorated its international partnerships, as evidenced by the early signing of the Bilateral Security Agreement with the United States and the NATO-Afghanistan Enduring Partnership. The upcoming visit of the high-level delegation of Afghanistan to the United States, led by His Excellency President Ashraf Ghani, will provide an important opportunity to deepen those commitments. In addition, the Government has set a new tone in its dialogue with the international community, including by expanding its partnerships with many countries that supported Afghanistan in the past decade. Those renewed commitments are votes of confidence in a peaceful, stable Afghanistan and in the belief that peace and security in Afghanistan are essential to regional and global stability.

Lasting peace and security are critical to building a prosperous and stable Afghanistan and to ending the vicious cycle of fragility in the country. That is particularly true at a time when violence affects increasing numbers of civilians and when the crippling triple threat of terrorism, extremism and criminality threatens to undermine the future of the Afghan people and the wider region. That is why the peace and reconciliation process is the first priority of the Government of Afghanistan. Afghans from all walks of life are united in their urgent call for peace, and their active involvement is crucial to the success of the reconciliation process. As President Ghani said,

> "The peace process is not a monopoly of the Government; all our nation should take part in it."

It is time for those still engaged in fighting to heed the widespread call for peace and play their part in building the country's future.

We welcome the new phase of cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan towards the shared goal of peace and reconciliation. It is essential to the success of the peace process and heralds a new era of relations between our two brother nations. We also welcome the support of all our partners, particularly in the region and in the Islamic world, and would like to express our

appreciation to the People's Republic of China for its help in facilitating the peace process.

The renewal of UNAMA's mandate is a testament to the continuing partnership among Afghanistan, the United Nations and the international community. The Council's call for an examination sends a clear message of dedication to long-term, effective support to Afghanistan. All of our collective efforts over the past 13 years, the blood spilled and the lives lost, have been aimed at enabling Afghanistan to become a full member of the international community as a stable, peaceful and democratic country. The time for Afghanistan to take full responsibility as a sovereign nation has come. With the support of the international community, now and in the future, we can achieve that critical goal.

The President (*spoke in French*): Members of the Council have before them document S/2015/168, which contains the text of a draft resolution submitted by Spain. The Council is ready to proceed to the vote on the draft resolution before it. I shall put the draft resolution to the vote now.

A vote was taken by show of hands.

In favour:

Angola, Chad, Chile, China, France, Jordan, Lithuania, Malaysia, New Zealand, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Spain, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

The President (*spoke in French*): The draft resolution received 15 votes in favour. The draft resolution has been adopted unanimously as resolution 2210 (2015).

I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to begin by welcoming Special Representative of the Secretary-General Nicholas Haysom to the Security Council and by thanking him for his briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and the activities of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would also like to welcome and thank Ambassador Tanin of Afghanistan for his words.

I take this opportunity to express our thanks to the other members of the Security Council for entrusting us with the responsibility of being the penholder on the Security Council's work regarding the situation in Afghanistan. For me and for my delegation, it is an honour that we are very happy to assume, and I can guarantee Spain's firm commitment to Afghanistan. That has always been the case, particularly in our bilateral relations. On 1 January, the same day that Spain assumed its responsibility as a non-permanent member of the Security Council, Afghanistan began a new stage in its recent history of the past 13 years, and the Council indicated that this is the transformation decade aimed at bringing about economic sustainability and security in the country. Once that transformation is achieved, there will be a national unity Government, which will represent the first democratic transition of power in the country.

With those changes, Afghanistan has fully recognized its sovereignty and, in our view, its ownership and leadership of its own process of national reconstruction and economic and social development, including peace and reconciliation between the members of its national community. There is, however, something that did not change on 1 January, and that is the commitment of the international community to the country and our common desire to continue to support Afghanistan, its institutions and its citizens in the processes I have mentioned. We have just adopted the new resolution 2210 (2015), which extends UNAMA's mandate for an additional year in accordance and in consultation with the Afghan Government. The members of the Council view the adoption of the resolution as a recognition of a new era and as an expression of the support of the international community.

I would like to take opportunity to highlight the fact that the resolution includes important changes with regard to previous resolutions. First, it recognizes and reflects an adaptation to the new situation following 1 January. Secondly, it underscores the sovereignty, ownership and leadership of Afghans. Thirdly and finally, it recommends that the Secretary-General begin examining the structures and activities of the United Nations in Afghanistan in full consultation and cooperation with the Afghan Government and with all interested parties, particularly the donor community. Spain feels that those three elements form the starting point in this new stage, and we would like to call upon all parties participating in the process to ensure that everyone, acting in accordance with their own responsibilities, will be cooperative, constructive and responsible in their actions. That is what we intend to do.

Accordingly, I would like to endorse the statement to be delivered later by the observer of the European Union on the subject. Spain fully endorses that statement.

In conclusion, while fully supporting the new authorities in Afghanistan and their citizens, I would like to issue two calls. On the one hand, I would like to call on the Afghan institutions and authorities to continue their progress with the urgency and responsibility that the process deserves in their pursuit to form the national unity Government. We trust that the Government will soon and decisively carry out its announced programme of reforms and that it will reinforce the progress of the past 13 years in the areas of democratization, good governance and human rights, in particular the rights of women. We also trust that the Government will persevere in its efforts to bring about national peace and reconciliation and will continue to work closely with its neighbours in order to address all common challenges.

I would also call upon the citizens of Afghanistan to persevere in the democratic process with a view to designing and building their common future — as we saw them do in the electoral process last year. Challenges remain, but the achievements are concrete and the capacity of the Afghan people in overcoming difficulties has been more than proven. We should not risk any backsliding, particularly in the area of democratization and the rights of men and women in Afghanistan.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): At the outset, allow me to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretarhy-General, for his briefing, which provided a comprehensive description of the current situation in Afghanistan and included valuable observations. Mr. Haysom and the members of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) deserve our appreciation for their dedication in carrying out their duties under the challenging conditions in the country.

I also wish to thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement, which outlined his Government's views and analysis of the latest developments. Malaysia congratulates Afghanistan on its historic transition into the transformation decade. The process and the progress are now firmly in the hands of its own people. I take this opportunity to reaffirm to Ambassador Tanin Malaysia's commitment as a partner to Afghanistan in this time of progress and development.

As stated in the December 2014 document of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan entitled "Realizing Self-Reliance — Commitments to Reforms and Renewed Partnership", Afghanistan now stands alongside Malaysia and other Muslim-majority democracies in the community of nations. The Afghan leadership's strong testament to inclusivity and stability has been reflected in a number of subsequent positive developments on the political track. We commend the patient and respectful conduct of the ongoing negotiations between President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah under the power-sharing framework. The way forward for the Afghan people should be grounded in the principles of the country's sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity. In that context, we wish to express our hope for a successful outcome to the final formation of the national unity Government.

The "Realizing Self-Reliance" document outlines numerous reform measures that the Afghan Government aims to carry out. It is evident that they are under no illusions on the complexity of the exercise. While we note the realistic assessments presented by the Afghan Government, we are more encouraged by its drive and determination to succeed. We are confident that Afghanistan will continue to build momentum on that course, and we look forward to the upcoming action plan on the implementation of its priorities. The Afghan Government has pledged itself to strong international engagement with increased Afghan ownership and leadership in the areas of security, governance, development and the effective delivery of commitments — inter alia through the Kabul process, the London Conference and the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework.

At the same time, we should also note the importance for political and developmental activities of international organizations active in Afghanistan and for other international aid and resources to be in greater alignment with the priorities set by Afghan Government. Malaysia believes that, at the current stage, it remains imperative for the United Nations and the international community to continue to lend their support, encouragement and assistance to Afghanistan through reconstruction and redevelopment efforts for rebuilding the country. In the light of the crucial need for sustained assistance, we hope the donor community will expeditiously fulfil their commitments to that end.

In relation to the humanitarian emergency response to last month's extreme weather, Malaysia extends its condolences to the Government and the people of Afghanistan following the tragic loss of more than 220 lives and the displacement of more than 6,000 families across the country. We were encouraged by last week's report by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs that stated that the emergency response in the district of Panjshir had been phased out and that the response gap in assessed areas appeared to be minimized. Malaysia hopes and prays that the people and Government of Afghanistan will quickly recover from that calamity.

Despite the noteworthy developments, Malaysia remains deeply concerned about the security situation on the ground. As reflected in the recent UNAMA report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict in Afghanistan, the year 2014 saw the highest number of documented civilian casualties; a total of 3,699 deaths and 6,849 injuries were documented. Malaysia condemns the deliberate targeting of civilians by anti-Government elements, which has led to the highest toll on civilian lives in Afghanistan since UNAMA began documenting civilian casualties. All parties should respect both the letter and the spirit of international humanitarian law in order to win the hearts and minds of the Afghan people with a view to their national reconciliation and integration process.

My delegation is particularly alarmed about the increasingly negative impact of the conflict on children. We are shocked by the repeated incidents involving anti-Government armed groups killing and maiming Afghan boys and girls and attacking schools and hospitals. Malaysia welcomes the adoption and endorsement, on 2 February, of a decree by President Ghani Ahmadzai to criminalize underage recruitment into armed forces. We encourage the Afghan Government to continue to intensify its efforts to comply with the action plan it had adopted pursuant to resolution 1612 (2005).

Malaysia observes an increasingly positive atmosphere in the region in support of the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process. We welcome the convening of the inaugural Afghanistan-China-Pakistan Trilateral strategic dialogue, held on 9 February in Kabul. We also look forward to Pakistan's hosting of the fifth Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process later this year, following the successful outcome of the previous Heart of Asia Conference held in Beijing in October 2014. Such constructive regional engagement is essential to reinforce support for Afghanistan's own efforts towards an inclusive reconciliation process. On that note, we commend the convening of the national conference of the Afghan People's Dialogue on Peace: Building the Foundations for an Inclusive Peace Process, held on 15 January, and we are encouraged by the efforts of the High Peace Council. That convergence of developments deserves the focus and attention of the international community. We hope that key stakeholders in the country and in the region will continue to intensify their efforts to that end.

Malaysia firmly supports the reconciliation and reintegration efforts undertaken by the Government of Afghanistan within the context of respect for the country's democracy and Constitution, non-violence and respect for the rights of all Afghan people. We believe that an approach based on the principle of moderation would be the most effective way to find common ground and overcome the voices of extremists.

While Afghanistan endeavours to sustain peace and stability in the country, Malaysia remains fully committed in its peacebuilding efforts and its provision of assistance to Afghanistan. I would like to take this opportunity to place on record our appreciation to the Government of Afghanistan for its invitation for Malaysia to join the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Prior to the ending of the ISAF mandate, a Malaysian medical team had been stationed in the country to provide medical, dental and health-care services to the Afghan civilian population. I should also thank New Zealand in that regard, as the Malaysian medical team received valuable logistical support from the New Zealand transitional reconstruction team while based together in Bamyan province. The Malaysian Government is also committed to providing technical capacity-building programmes for Afghanistan. Since 2002, more than 520 Afghan officials have received training in Malaysia through the Malaysian technical cooperation programme, the third-country training programme and other frameworks.

Malaysia firmly believes that the international community should continue to support Afghanistan as the country proceeds down the path it has charted. The interconnected nature of existing challenges requires sustained and mutually reinforcing progress in various fields. The entry into the transformation decade will bring forth new challenges and new approaches for

collaboration in resolving them. We should now concentrate on looking at approaches to complement and seal the gains that Afghanistan has achieved.

Through resolution 2210 (2015), just adopted this morning, the Security Council sets out the mandate of UNAMA for the next 12 months. We are pleased that UNAMA and the Government of Afghanistan will continue to maintain a close partnership, which is vital to ensuring sustainable peace and stability in the country. The Secretary-General has also been tasked with examining the modalities for the next steps in the evolution of UNAMA's relationship with Afghanistan. We hope that will lead to a more productive and effective collaboration between the host county, the United Nations system and the international community. I would like to express my appreciation to the Spanish delegation for its hard work on the preparation of the resolution.

Let me conclude by reaffirming Malaysia's sincere commitment in supporting the Afghan Government in its efforts to achieve peace, security and stability in the country during the transformation decade and beyond.

Mrs. Jakubonė (Lithuania): I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for his briefing.

Lithuania aligns itself with the statement to be delivered on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States.

As of 1 January, Afghanistan has opened a new chapter in its history. The Afghan people have entered the transformation decade, fully assuming responsibility for their security, with the first peaceful and democratic transition of power and first ever national unity Government. Nonetheless, further perseverance from the Afghan authorities is critically needed as the situation in the country remains volatile and a number of formidable challenges loom.

The first and foremost task is to strengthen Afghanistan's ailing economy, which poses a threat to its stability and affects the Government's capacity to carry out administrative functions and provide services. In that regard, we strongly encourage President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah to press ahead with good governance and other relevant reforms. The road map for the way ahead is clearly agreed upon, most notably in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework and the recent paper of the Afghan Government on the reform programme, entitled "Realizing Self-Reliance". In particular, Afghan authorities must step up the fight against corruption; the illicit economy, in particular by boosting counter-narcotics efforts; and the embezzlement of public funds. It must also significantly improve revenue collection, while simultaneously developing economic sectors — especially agriculture, mining and services.

Secondly, ensuring security remains yet another daunting task for the Afghan Government. The past year and the first months of this year were marked with record numbers of incidents and civilian casualties, including among women and children. Almost every day Afghan forces are challenged by insurgency activities, armed clashes, targeted killings and suicide attacks. We commend the resolve of Afghan National Security Forces in thwarting attacks by anti-Government elements. However, continued international assistance to further develop Afghan security forces and institutions remains essential. In that regard, we believe that the new NATO non-combat, training, advisory and assistance mission is another important contribution. But beyond that, the appalling human cost borne by ordinary Afghans underscores the necessity for an inclusive peaceful resolution to the conflict. In that context, we welcome President Ghani's leadership in calling for Afghan-to-Afghan dialogue and building closer relations with its neighbours, particularly Pakistan. We welcome the new Administration's increased emphasis on regional dialogue and cooperation.

Thirdly, to sustain the impressive progress on development achieved since 2001, Afghanistan has to continue tghe meaningful progress made on human rights, and in particular on women's rights. We call on Afghan authorities to deliver on their promises to advance the position of women and girls in political, economic and social life, including by appointing women ministers and urgently developing a strategy to fully implement the elimination of violence against women law, including by providing services to victims and access to justice. The United Nations has repeatedly raised concerns over the illegal practice of arresting and prosecuting women for so-called moral crimes. Special focus must be placed on human rights and gender issues in the Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace and reconciliation process. The December 2014 meeting of Chief Executive Officer Abdullah with the heads of the provincial peace committees, which encouraged

greater participation by women in the peace process, was a positive step.

Lastly, my delegation commends Mr. Ghani and Mr. Abdullah for their leadership and spirit of compromise. Lithuania urges the political leaders to quickly conclude the process of a merit-based appointment and the approval of senior Government officials. Likewise, swift electoral reform is needed so that it can take effect prior to the holding of the Wolesi Jirga and the district council elections envisaged for 2015.

Notwithstanding the support of international community, the primary responsibility for the future of Afghanistan lies with the Afghans themselves. The reform programme and commitments presented by the Afghan unity Government are encouraging. Lithuania stands ready to support its efforts by remaining committed to the political, military and civilian support to Afghanistan, including through participation in the Resolute Support Mission, the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, as well as contributing to the Afghan National Army trust fund. The interaction, synergies and close cooperation among the United Nations, the EU and NATO are of great importance as we continue our efforts to promote durable peace and reconciliation processes, stabilization and the development of the country.

My delegation expresses its appreciation to the Permanent Mission of Spain for resolution 2210 (2015) ,on the UNAMA mandate extension for one year, as well as for its efficient facilitation of the negotiating process. The continuous presence and role of UNAMA and other United Nations agencies, including at the provincial level, remain crucial for the development of Afghanistan and the benefit of each and every Afghan.

Ms. Power (United States of America): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom and Ambassador Tanin for their observations today. On behalf of the United States, I would like to thank Mr. Haysom and his team for their dedicated and humane work to help the Afghan people improve their lives, their institutions and their nation. Today's unanimous renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) shows the Council's ongoing support for their efforts and for Afghanistan.

As we mark the beginning of Afghanistan's transformation decade, we have seen both encouraging advances and enduring challenges. Last year we saw Afghans take real risks and conquer fear to cast their ballots in an election. We saw two candidates put the country's future first, forming a unity Government and sustaining it as they confront shared challenges, including the formation of the Cabinet, electoral reform and peace and reconciliation. The United States calls on the leaders to put forward urgently a full slate of Cabinet nominees who meet the rigorous requirements that they establish and who can obtain parliamentary approval.

We commend President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah's shared commitment to prioritizing electoral reform. Last year's election exposed chronic weaknesses in Afghanistan's electoral system. Promptly identifying the necessary reforms and implementing them urgently and in a manner consistent with international standards is critical, including to ensure successful parliamentary and district council elections. Establishing the special electoral reform commission, which the two leaders agreed upon last fall, would be an important step towards that end.

Making fundamental changes to a country's political and electoral system is challenging under any circumstances. Yet Afghans are undertaking that extraordinary task amid continued attacks by insurgents who seek to destabilize the country. UNAMA's exceptional reporting on the toll on civilians, which is a model for other missions, testifies to the impact of the violence on Afghan society, particularly on some of its most vulnerable members. Compared to 2013, civilian casualties increased by 22 per cent in 2014, civilian deaths rose by 25 per cent, the number of women casualties increased by 21 per cent and the number of child casualties by 40 per cent. There were 714 children — kids — killed in 2014.

UNAMA's reporting attributes roughly 75 per cent of all civilian casualties to the Taliban and affiliated groups. What statistics cannot capture is the immeasurable impact on the families of those wounded or killed. For example, UNAMA's report tells us that women, left as sole income providers after their husbands were killed or maimed, experienced lasting consequences,

> "with poverty forcing many women to give their daughters in marriage in exchange for debts or to take their children out of school often to work".

That does not even capture the emotion and pain of all the losses.

Afghanistan's leaders understand the far-reaching impact of violence on the Afghan people, which is one of the many reasons they have committed to bringing peace to their country — a goal we strongly support. We see tremendous bravery exhibited by many Afghans. One unheralded group is the de-miners, who venture out day after day to clear minefields so that their fellow citizens are not maimed as they harvest their land or walk to school. Last year 34 de-miners were killed, including 11 killed by insurgents on 13 December while they were clearing unexploded ordnance in Helmand province. We see similar dedication in the legions of Afghan teachers who show up in their classrooms every day, despite threats and harassment, to give boys and girls the education they need to build their future and the future of their country.

We also honour Afghan security forces, who risk their lives, and in far too many cases give their lives, protecting their fellow citizens. Their resolve and capabilities have improved a great deal. The continued professionalization of the Afghan national defence and security forces, with robust, sustained international support, including through NATO's Resolute Support Mission, is crucial both to improving effectiveness and ensuring more faithful adherence to international human-rights standards. The abusive tactics reported to UNAMA and catalogued in its recent report on the treatment of Afghan detainees have no place in the pursuit of justice; nor does the complicity of justice officials who, according to the same report, overwhelmingly rely on confessions from defendants in criminal prosecutions, even when credible evidence suggests that such confessions may have been obtained through abusive tactics. That is why we applaud the Afghan Government's commitment to eliminating the use of torture.

As everyone here knows, last week we marked International Women's Day. It was a day for marking a number of inspiring stories from around the world, including Afghanistan, a country where under Taliban rule women could not walk outside without a male relative and a burqa. Last week, members of the Afghanistan women's national cycling team were not only walking outside, they were racing down the country's roads on their bikes. Team members are pinched for resources but big on courage. Some drivers yell at them and threaten them, but they ride on. One day a man on a motorcycle reached out and tried to grab at the captain, causing her to crash and hurt her back. But today she is back on her bike, leading more than 40 women training with the team. Imagine what it must feel like to be a little girl sitting in a car and to suddenly drive by those 40 women flying down the road in single file. Imagine how inspiring that must be. One of the team members, Malika Yousifi, wants to become the first Afghan woman to complete the Tour de France. She told a reporter, "Nothing will stop us." We believe that if she is given the chance, and if her country stays on the brave political path it has charted, Malika is right. Nothing will stop them.

There is so much to lose and so much left to gain in these difficult days. The United States will support the Afghan people on every step of their journey to take their place as a stable, peaceful, independent and democratic nation.

Mr. McLay (New Zealand): I would like to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing and for his ongoing work in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for so eloquently reminding us where Afghanistan has come from over the past 13 years. We salute that progress, while remaining ever mindful of the challenges that lie ahead.

Today's briefing and mandate renewal come at a critical time for Afghanistan, as the national unity Government seeks to establish itself and the country adjusts to what might be described as post-International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) realities. Against that background, and the significant security, development and governance challenges that the country still faces, the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) assumes even greater significance.

Over the past decade, the support of the international community, coupled with the sacrifice and effort of the Afghan people, has delivered real progress in security, health, education and infrastructure. Indeed, we have all invested heavily in Afghanistan's success. It is therefore important that the Security Council send a strong signal and message of unity and of our ongoing commitment and support as Afghanistan enters its

decade of transformation. New Zealand's commitment to Afghanistan since 2001, referred to by the representative of Malaysia earlier, and our continued support through a training and development assistance programme reflects the importance we attach to the country's long-term success.

New Zealand commends President Ghani and Mr. Abdullah on their formation of a Government of national unity and on making all the compromises necessary for that process. Unified and responsible leadership is essential if Afghanistan is to move successfully from transition to transformation, and UNAMA and the international community will play an important role in supporting all of that. We look forward to progress on electoral reform, as the Special Representative mentioned, and the strengthening of Afghanistan's governance institutions. We also look forward to an increased role for women.

However, the Council must not lose sight of the ongoing security challenges facing Afghanistan. Indeed, we should be concerned at the deterioration of the security situation. Last year saw the second highest number of reported security incidents since 2002. For the first time, ground engagements were the leading cause of civilian casualties, as the Special Representative said and others have detailed. We therefore echo the Secretary-General's call for all parties

> "to respect the laws of war, including the distinction between civilians and combatants, and to avoid using heavy weapons in civilian-populated areas".

The Resolute Support Mission is a non-combat operation. It is therefore crucial that the Afghan National Security Forces maintain stability. For the foreseeable future, that will require the ongoing support of international partners. Longer-term, peace will only come about if we meet the development aspirations of the Afghan people. As we say so often, in so many different situations, economic development is key to stability and self-reliance. In the short term, we will have to help mitigate the severe economic impacts of ISAF's withdrawal. In that UNAMA will again play a very critical role. It must provide assistance, particularly through engagement on human right. It must promote coherence and coordination of international support. And, of course, it must work with the Afghan Government to align all of that with national needs and priorities.

New Zealand has often said, both before and since joining the Council, that we must do better at conflict prevention, and we say it again in the context of Afghanistan. Afghanistan stands at a crucial juncture. The risk of relapse into conflict can be avoided, but we must all support it in remaining on the path of peace. Economic development will be central to that pathway. New Zealand supports and encourages the Government of Afghanistan's pursuit of reconciliation with moderate Taliban, but that can happen only at a pace and in a manner acceptable to Afghanistan itself, and if there is the alignment of circumstance of which the Special Representative has already spoken. It is important that the Council's implementation of the Taliban sanctions regime also support efforts aimed at peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. New Zealand chairs the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011), and recognizes that it can play a positive role in achieving results for Afghanistan.

New Zealand is pleased that today's resolution 2210 (2015) provides for the Secretary-General to begin examining the activities, structure and role of the United Nations system in Afghanistan in close consultation with the Afghan Government. In this transformation decade such constitutionalism and consultation is essential. We commend the Council's willingness to engage directly with Afghanistan in drafting the resolution so that the country's views were reflected in the mandate we have just renewed. As Ambassador Tanin emphasized, that process has produced a very good outcome, in line with the principle of national ownership. New Zealand welcomes the Afghan Government's wish to take on a greater role in the leadership and ownership of its own security and development. We see that as a natural and necessary step in any emergence from conflict — certainly in any emergence that is consistent with core peacebuilding principles. We therefore wish the Government and people of Afghanistan well and offer our ongoing support for their endeavours.

Mr. Wang Min (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate. I also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom for his briefing and Ambassador Tanin, Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, for his statement.

Thanks to the tireless efforts of the Afghan Government and people and the firm support of the international community, Afghanistan smoothly completed political, security and economic transitions

at the end of 2014 and entered its important transformation decade, thereby turning a new page in the country's history. The Chinese Government and people congratulate the Government and the people of Afghanistan for the significant achievements made. However, we should also note that Afghanistan still faces various difficulties and challenges in the political, security, economic and reconciliation fields. Looking to the future, Afghanistan's achievement of sustainable economic and social development will hinge mainly on the efforts of the Government and the people of Afghanistan themselves. In the meantime, they will also rely on the continuing massive support and assistance provided by the international community, based on full respect for Afghanistan's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

I wish to make the following points.

First, the current mindset must be changed to adapt to the new normal of the Afghanistan situation — or, as Ambassador Tanin said, the new reality. This year marks the first year of Afghanistan's transformation decade. As the country enters a new stage of political, economic and social development, the Government and the people of Afghanistan will have to shoulder increased responsibilities in national reconstruction and economic and social development, which is in accord with the fundamental principle resolving the Afghanistan situation with the ownership and leadership of the Afghan people. The international community should focus on the new long-term view, proactively adapt to the new normal of the significant role of the people and the Government and give them full confidence and support, while actively helping them strengthen their capacity-building in all areas aimed at a unified Afghanistan and its people enjoying self-esteem, self-improvement and self-reliance.

Secondly, we firmly believe in the steady advancement of Afghanistan's reconciliation. A broad-based and inclusive reconciliation owned and led by the Afghan people is the correct direction to ensure Afghanistan's progress towards national unity, harmony and lasting peace. China appreciates the efforts of Afghan President Ahmadzai in promoting national reconciliation. We believe that the Government and the people of Afghanistan, with the assistance of the international community, will achieve harmony and peaceful coexistence among all of its ethnic groups. China is ready to play a constructive role in that regard based on the needs of Afghanistan's various factions. China stands ready to provide at any time necessary assistance and facilities for the peace and reconciliation process.

Thirdly, Afghanistan must march in step with the times and strive for new opportunities in terms of economic development. Economic development is the basis and guarantee to Afghanistan's lasting peace and stability. Afghanistan enjoys abundant resources and geographical advantage, and thus has huge potential for economic development. China welcomes and appreciates the development strategy that has been meticulously worked out by the new Government, which is well suited to the country's conditions and will accelerate its economic development. The international community must actively collaborate and fully honour its commitments in order to achieve further results in Afghanistan's economy based on its national priorities. China is ready to assist the Government of Afghanistan based on its own development experience and convergence points between the two countries' development strategies in stepping up construction related to infrastructure, mining, agriculture and water projects, among other areas, and in further developing its economy and improving people's livelihoods.

Fourthly, the open, inclusive and active support of Afghanistan' in its increased participation in regional cooperation is necessary, as strengthened regional cooperation is an important guarantee for the country's peaceful reconstruction. A solution to the Afghanistan question will not succeed without the support and cooperation of the countries in the region. Improved and strengthened relations with countries in the region and increased engagement in regional economic cooperation will assist Afghanistan in creating conditions favourable to its peaceful development.

China welcomes the steps taken by Afghanistan, based on its development needs, to actively participate in China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative, and to join hands in our common development for mutual benefit and results. China would also like to support the strengthened role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and other regional organizations in efforts to settle the Afghan question. Last year, China successfully hosted the fourth Istanbul Process Ministerial Conference. China looks forward to further positive results from the fifth meeting, to be held in Pakistan.

Fifthly, coordinated efforts to strengthen and improve the role of the United Nations in Afghanistan are necessary. China supports the ongoing, active role of the United Nations on behalf of Afghanistan. We support the efforts of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in addressing the Afghanistan issue and believe that UNAMA's mandate should address the requirements of further improving and perfecting the transformation process with a view to improved support for, and cooperation with, the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts towards national reconciliation and reconstruction.

In that work, UNAMA should respect the leadership role of the Afghan Government and strengthen communication and cooperation with it to genuinely ensure that the result of one plus one will be larger than two. China is ready to work with other Council members and with the Afghan Government in diligently seeking improved measures to ensure UNAMA's heightened role on behalf of Afghanistan.

China and Afghanistan have a long history of exchanges. China is also a friend and neighbour of Afghanistan. Peace and security in Afghanistan are therefore closely related to the security situation in western China. China looks forward to seeing a united, stable, developed and friendly Afghanistan.

This year marks the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries. In January, Chinese President Xi Jinping exchanged messages of congratulations with the President of Afghanistan. They warmly congratulated each other on the sixtieth anniversary and the Year of China-Afghanistan Friendship and Cooperation, the prelude to raising China-Afghanistan cooperation in al fields to new heights.

China stands ready to join the international community in continuing its firm support to Afghanistan in its national reconciliation and peaceful reconstruction efforts and in promoting improved results in the transformation process, and in greater contributions towards economic development and improving the people's livelihoods, with a view to long-term peace and stability.

Mr. Hmoud (Jordan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his briefing. I thank him and the team of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their efforts.

Afghanistan is now moving into the transformation decade, which shows clearly that it is headed towards a better future for its citizens. The period ahead is replete not only with opportunities but also with challenges, some of which could pose a threat to the future of Afghanistan. The Afghan people themselves must confront those challenges with determination, and this effort will depend first and foremost on the competence and performance of the new Government. It is also important to pursue dialogue and consultations among the Afghan factions. The reconciliation process has been marked by a number of incidents of attempted sabotage, threatening territorial integrity and peace in Afghanistan. That is one of the greatest challenges facing the new Afghan Government, which must address this issue as a top priority.

We attach great importance to the fact that the Government is pursuing the national reconciliation process in order to make progress towards a comprehensive reconciliation in Afghanistan. On that basis, we would urge the implementation of the reform processes that have been announced by the President of Afghanistan since he took office. Some of those measures were announced during the London Conference last year, and they can strengthen stability in Afghanistan. In this regard, we hope that the new Afghan Government will be formed as soon as possible and that the reform process will be accelerated.

The political and security process in Afghanistan must be supported by economic, social and educational measures. Despite the progress that has been made in those areas in Afghanistan, the Government must redouble its efforts in order to protect its citizens from the various threats and from terrorist activities. It must also strengthen and speed up the implementation of measures aimed at combating corruption and protecting human rights. The Government must also reform the various security and civilian sectors and work to find a solution to the problem of internally displaced persons. We call on the Government of Afghanistan to make greater efforts with regard to the empowerment of women at all levels, and also to guarantee that the perpetrators of human rights violations are pursued and brought to justice.

We encourage the Afghan Government to hold strategic talks with neighbouring countries so as

to strengthen cooperation in various areas. We also urge Afghanistan's neighbours to strengthen mutual confidence-building measures and to support Afghanistan through security cooperation efforts and regional processes. Such projects, after all, are in everyone's interest.

The Afghan forces will be in charge of security and the fight against drug trafficking and terrorism following the end of the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force. This will be a real test for the country, especially given the fact that summer is coming. The international community must continue to support the Afghan forces so that they can eradicate such phenomena.

Finally, we call on the international community and all donor countries to continue their support for Afghanistan and to provide it the necessary support so as to guarantee development and stability in the country, with full respect for the principles of neutrality and sovereignty and for humanitarian principles. We call on the Afghan authorities to appropriately manage all international assistance and call upon them to ensure that such assistance reaches its intended beneficiaries.

We would also like to express our appreciation for the work done by United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, which has been undertaking its mandate under difficult conditions, and we encourage it to continue its support for the Government in the framework of resolution 2210 (2015), which we have just adopted. We therefore await a review of peacekeeping operations in Afghanistan in the context of the comprehensive review of peacekeeping operations to be carried out by the Secretary-General.

We call on the Afghan Government to take hold of the reins of power and implement the transformation decade.

Mr. Safronkov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We wish first to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Haysom, for his briefing on the situation in Afghanistan and, of course, Ambassador Tanin for his substantive briefing.

We agree with the assessment we heard today. A difficult situation continues to prevail in Afghanistan, and we are concerned about the increasing activities of fighters, of which civilians are the primary victims. This negative trend is reflected in the most recent report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/151), which states that in past year alone, the conflict has claimed the lives of more than 10,000 civilians. This is a regrettable scorecard for the contemporary history of Afghanistan. This state of affairs clearly suggests that the International Security Assistance Force, which has left the country, did not fulfil the mandated handed down by the Security Council, just as it has not provided us with a comprehensive report on the work it did over the 13 years of its presence in the country.

We hope that the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission will be more conscientious, and we urge the Security Council, in line with resolution 2189 (2014), to closely monitor its activities. There is no doubt that extremists will continue to put the new Afghan Government to the test, in an attempt to use the withdrawal of the international presence in Afghanistan to tilt the balance of power in their favour.

Spring is on the horizon, a time during which it is traditional for fighters to escalate their activities. The Afghan National Security Forces will be put to a serious test regarding their ability to independently counter the terrorist threat.

We take note with satisfaction of the efforts of President Ghani to achieve national reconciliation. This is the only way to achieve lasting peace in Afghanistan. We are pleased to note that the resolution just adopted reflects the desire of the Afghan people to play a leading role in governing the country in the context of the process of national reconciliation, with the support of the United Nations Mission.

Also of the utmost relevance is the principle of national reconciliation and related principles such as the laying down of weapons, recognition of the Afghan Constitution, cutting ties with Al-Qaida and other terrorist organizations, and, of course, commitment to a stable Afghanistan. Imperative here is strict compliance with the Al-Qaida and Taliban sanctions regime. We would once again call attention to the obstinate disregard reflected in the report of the Secretary-General with respect to any reference to these terrorist organizations. What does this mean? That this organization no longer exists in Afghanistan and that the Al-Qaida issue has been taken off the agenda? All the evidence, including that which we heard today in the Security Council Chamber, seems to bear witness to the contrary. We note with concern the increased terrorist threat in Afghanistan and the broadening geographical reach of the activities and influence of the Islamic State in

Iraq and the Sham, which is spreading a radical, hostile version of Islam. We call on the members of the Security Council to develop a programme of joint activities at the United Nations so as to halt the spreading influence of that terrorist group.

We are alarmed by the increasingly frequent reports of deterioration in the situation in northern Afghanistan in areas bordering our friends and allies in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Extremists there are actively engaging in propaganda and recruitment, entrenching their physical presence. The States of Central Asia have legitimate concerns regarding those developments, since it was not long ago that the north was a nearly calm region, distinguishing itself clearly from other parts of the country. Its becoming yet another safe haven for militants and extremists is categorically unacceptable.

The increase in the drug threat emanating from the territory of Afghanistan is a cause of particular concern, not only to neighbouring States but to the world over. The volume of drug production, according to the report of the Secretary-General, is the equivalent of 15 per cent of the country's gross national product. That is a striking figure. The drug business remains one of the sources of financing for extremist and terrorist organizations. The refusal by some in the international community to take decisive action in that area and draw up effective approaches for eradicating the problem of drug-trafficking from Afghanistan exacerbates the terrorist threat.

The Russian Federation continues to counter the flow of Afghan opiates, working with our partners from the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as well as within the framework of the Russian-Afghan cooperation. We must once again express our regret regarding the position of NATO, which has repeatedly drawn on trumped up excuses to turn down multiple proposals for mutually beneficial cooperation with the CSTO in combatting Afghan drug production.

We listened with interest to President Ghani's proposals to adjust UNAMA's mandate. We support the proactive intention of the Afghan Government to take the country's future into its own hands and strengthen its sovereignty and independence in all spheres. The Russian Federation supports the United Nations Mission in coordinating international civilian efforts with a view to stabilizing Afghanistan by actively assisting its Government.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I would like to join others in thanking the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/151), Special Representative Nicholas Haysom for his briefing and Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his remarks this morning.

There have been significant and positive developments in Afghanistan since the Security Council last met in this format (see S/PV.7347). The International Security Assistance Force mission concluded operations after 13 years, and the Resolute Support Mission has now begun. That marks the end of a period of transition and the start of a period of transformation, with full Afghan ownership of its national affairs. I should like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all of the servicemen and servicewomen, international and Afghan alike, whose service and sacrifice have made that progress possible.

I will focus my statement today on three key issues: the support provided by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to the Afghan Government's reform agenda, support for a peace process, and the current security challenges.

I welcome the extension of UNAMA's mandate today. UNAMA plays a critical role in Afghanistan and its continued presence is a strong sign of the international community's enduring commitment to Afghanistan and its people. I commend President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah on the steps they have taken since the formation of the national unity Government. In the first months of this year, we saw early action on tackling corruption, as well as agreement on the 2015 budget. We support the goals of President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah to deliver economic security by tackling corruption, to enact political reform and to consolidate progress on human rights and national security. Yet the economic situation remains precarious. Government fiscal discipline is vital, as is sustained donor support. The swift confirmation of the final ministerial appointments to the national unity Government will help to safeguard the gains made, build confidence and aid the reform process. UNAMA will play an essential role in support of those reform priorities. It will do so in a manner that is consistent with a sovereign Afghanistan. UNAMA's provision of good offices will assist political reform, aid in the preparations for parliamentary and provincial

council elections and protect the gains made on human rights.

It will also promote more coherent donor support to the Afghan Government's priorities as co-Chair of the Joint Coordination and Management Board. In order to fulfil its mandate, UNAMA must have the resources it needs to maintain its presence in the provinces. Our goal remains to ensure that Afghanistan remains on a path towards a sustainable future for all, and the United Kingdom is committed to supporting the Afghans to achieve that.

Securing a sustainable peace in Afghanistan through a political settlement remains the key to Afghanistan's future. Reconciliation is vital to any political settlement, and I welcome the efforts being made to ensure an inclusive peace process. We urge all parties to seize opportunities to make meaningful progress, recognizing that the process will take time. In that context, we welcome in particular the positive dialogue between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

As the Secretary-General's report makes clear, security remains volatile, and this year's fighting season will be no exception. The continued attacks in Kabul bring home to us the courage and perseverance of the people and the security forces of Afghanistan, as well as the members of the international community who support them. But the increases in civilian casualties, for which the Taliban are largely responsible, are concerning. Avoiding such casualties must be a priority for all parties. Through resolute support, we will help the Afghan National Security Forces by providing practical training, advice and assistance that aids their efforts to combat the insurgency.

In conclusion, the coming months will be challenging, but we must not lose sight of how far Afghanistan has come in the past year — and even more so in the past 13 years, as Ambassador Tanin pointed out. In the past 12 months alone, there has been the first peaceful democratic transfer of power, the formation of a national unity Government and the assumption of full Afghan responsibility for security. We now have a clear path ahead. The Afghan Government's reform priorities are the right ones. UNAMA, in close consultation with the Afghan Government and the international community, will continue to play a valuable role in supporting Afghanistan and its goals.

Mr. Mangaral (Chad) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representatives of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, for his detailed briefing. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan for his statement.

Resolution 2210 (2015), which renews the UNAMA mandate and which we have just adopted unanimously, marks a new stage of empowerment, accountability and leadership in Afghanistan under the Afghan authorities.

We welcome the improvements in the political situation in Afghanistan through the formation of the national unity Government following the framework agreement between the two leading presidential candidates. We therefore note with satisfaction the reforms undertaken by the new authorities, including the national reconciliation process aimed at achieving a lasting resolution of the conflict by the Afghans themselves. We also welcome the efforts agreed to by the international community, UNAMA and Afghan stakeholders during this crucial phase in Afghanistan's history.

On the security front, we welcome the end of the transition process, on 31 December 2014, which affected the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Afghan forces and allowed the latter to shoulder full responsibility for national security and enabled the beginning of the new, non-combat NATO support mission, in accordance with resolution 2189 (2014). We pay tribute to ISAF for the role it played and the enormous sacrifices it made. We honour the memory of those who gave their lives and call on the Afghan Government and its partners to enhance their vigilance so as to avoid, after the departure of ISAF, a situation such as that in Iraq, in particular given the allegiance of certain groups to the Islamic State and the presence of foreign fighters on Afghan soil.

We deplore the climate of uncertainty brought about by the political impasse, which has encouraged elements that are hostile to the Government to seek to undermine the population's confidence in the Government throughout the country. We also deplore the astonishing number of victims of that violence over the past year. Chad condemns the attacks against administrative and district centres, security force checkpoints and major roadways and calls on the Afghan Government and its partners to enhance their efforts to eradicate the growing insecurity, in particular in the south, south-east and east of the country. Chad welcomes the political and diplomatic efforts at the regional and international

levels, in particular on the part of China, to consolidate peace and security in Afghanistan, and we encourage its supporters to continue on that path.

We condemn all the violence and terrorist acts perpetrated by the armed groups and call on them to quickly join the national reconciliation process initiated by the Government for the well-being of the Afghan people, who aspire only to peace, which is a sine qua non for the country's development.

In terms of the fight against drugs and drug trafficking, Chad welcomes the most recent figures showing a decrease in drug trafficking, which has taken an incalculable toll on global security. We encourage the new Afghan authorities to continue to work towards its complete eradication. Therefore, we reiterate our encouragement to Afghanistan's neighbouring States and the international community to intensify their cross-border cooperation and fight against drugs and illicit trafficking.

We remain concerned about the deterioration in the humanitarian situation, in particular that of internally displaced persons, resulting from natural disasters and urge the international community to come to their aid. We also reiterate the Secretary-General's call for an increase in humanitarian assistance and welcome the fact that significant numbers of refugees are returning to Afghanistan.

In conclusion, we hope that the positive steps taken by the new Afghan authorities at the political and diplomatic levels will be successful. We send a warning to all armed groups that attack humanitarian personnel in order to prevent them from delivering aid to people in need. Finally, we reiterate our encouragement to all the personnel of the United Nations and other humanitarian agencies who, despite the difficult conditions in which they work in Afghanistan, continue to do their best to come to the aid of the Afghan people.

Mr. Suárez Moreno (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to thank you, Sir, for convening this quarterly debate on the situation in Afghanistan. We welcome the briefing by Mr. Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and the statement by Mr. Tanin, the representative of Afghanistan.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates its firm commitment to peace and the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States. We therefore welcome the fact that in September 2014, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan decided to leave its history of foreign intervention behind and resolved, through an electoral process, to take its destiny in its own hands as a free and sovereign people. We welcome the formation of a Government of national unity under the leadership of President Ghani at a time when the country is facing the task of consolidating its national institutions in the post-conflict period. It is important to reiterate that the Afghan people should have ownership of that process with the help of the international community.

We would like to highlight the work done by UNAMA in strengthening the peace process, including the help it provided in 2014 to establish the presidential commissions. We recognize the contribution that it has made and believe that UNAMA should continue to carry out its work in coordination with the Afghan Government.

The resolution that we adopted today (resolution 2210 (2015)) is a clear example of the joint work of Security Council members and the Afghan Government. The extension of the UNAMA mandate takes into consideration the new realities and challenges facing the country over the next decade.

National reconciliation should continue to be one of the priority objectives and must include the various sectors of Afghan society in efforts to consolidate democracy. Venezuela hopes that the Afghan people will participate actively in bringing about lasting peace, which can be achieved with the participation of the international community and regional neighbours. The Afghan political leaders should face those challenges in the context of the transformation decade 2015-2024, as established at the recent Kabul Conference and, most recently, the 2014 London Conference.

One of the most important challenges facing the current Government in the peace and reconciliation process is that of the economic situation. We call upon the Afghan authorities and the international community to take the steps necessary to bring about the economic stability that is so vital to addressing the many changes the country must make.

The security situation is of great concern, as highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (S/2015/151). We believe that the political process, which is aimed at achieving peace and stability, requires the Afghan people's full participation. In

that regard, Venezuela supports strengthening the institutional capacity of the Afghan State, including its armed forces, in order to neutralize the impact of extremist armed groups on the civilian population. The international community's support and that of neighbouring States is essential to strengthening internal security in Afghanistan. We appreciate, in that regard, the dialogue held between China, Pakistan and Afghanistan in February as a significant step towards peace and security in the region.

The existence of terrorist groups is not only an Afghan problem. The spread of such groups' reach is also currently affecting neighbouring countries, as those groups threaten to extend their presence and control over other territories. That is why we believe that all the measures taken by the Afghan Government to contain the impact of such groups within its territory are important.

We welcome the efforts undertaken by the Government of Afghanistan and international agencies to combat drug production. While the drug trade continues to be significant, the progress made by the Government in that regard is a further step towards the strengthening of the institutions of the State. In order for the fight against the scourge of drugs to be more effective, we believe that it is crucial that the Afghan Government coordinate its related activities among all agencies of the State in order to ensure that both domestic drug consumption and the export of drugs by criminal gangs to other countries are reduced.

We are concerned about the high number of internally displaced persons and refugees resulting from the internal conflict. The most recent numbers show that there has been an 8 per cent increase in those numbers, which means that there are more people in need of assistance. In that respect, we welcome the work being done by humanitarian agencies and call upon the Afghan authorities to remain committed to solving that problem.

In conclusion, Venezuela hopes for peace and security in Afghanistan and for all its ethnic groups to live in harmony. That will require joint efforts by the Government and the people of Afghanistan, with the assistance of the international community.

Mrs. Ogwu (Nigeria): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this important and timely debate. I also thank Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, for his very lucid and comprehensive briefing and Ambassador Tanin for a very perceptive outlook on his country's remarkable progress.

Afghanistan is at a critical stage in its post-conflict recovery. With a Government of national unity in place, the political dimension of the recovery has been given a significant boost. The Government is increasingly assuming leadership of the country's affairs, while pursuing national reconciliation through an inclusive Afghan-led process. Nigeria commends the Afghan Government for its commitment to the reform agenda agreed at the London Conference of 4 December. We welcome President Ghani's effort in not only promoting the rights of Afghan women, but also empowering them. No less significant is his unflagging commitment to electoral reform, which is crucial to the progress of Afghanistan's democratic transition. The decision of the Government to involve civil society in the electoral reform process is highly commendable. We look forward to the establishment of the Electoral Reform Commission, which, among other things, will address fundamental issues of governance, as stated in the political agreement of 21 December 2014.

We believe that transparency and inclusive governance constitute the key to building a united, secure and sovereign Afghanistan, where all citizens have a sense of belonging. The prevailing economic situation in the country, characterized by challenges in institutional capacity, infrastructural deficiencies and declining rates of economic growth, must be improved in order to support the reforms in other critical areas. We note that some progress has been made in developing the private sector; however, more effort is required to promote vibrant entrepreneurial activity. Foreign investment will be vital to stimulating economic growth in Afghanistan. We therefore ask the Government to continue to work assiduously towards improving the investment climate in the country, with a view to attracting more foreign capital.

Illicit drug-production and trafficking in Afghanistan remain a matter of concern to Nigeria. It is a major source of terrorist financing. It also undermines the rule of law, owing to its link with criminal activities, as noted in the Secretary-General's report. Nigeria commends the efforts of the Afghan law enforcement agencies, which have led to the seizure of substantial quantities of heroine, morphine and other narcotics, as well as to the destruction of heroine laboratories. We note that that success has been attributed to a combination of factors,

including the improved coordination of efforts among the Afghan law enforcement agencies and the improved capability of the police to conduct operations. It is vital that counter-narcotic operations in Afghanistan be strengthened with adequate support from the international community. That is needed in order to consolidate the gains made by the Government in the fight against illicit drug production and trafficking.

According to the Secretary-General's report, unexploded ordnance continues to affect a significant number of communities across Afghanistan. Owing to funding constraints, the 2014 targets set by the 10-year work plan of the Anti-personnel Mine Ban Convention could not be met. Unexploded ordnance is restricting freedom of movement, impeding agriculture and stifling economic growth. The removal of that threat is, therefore, an urgent matter. We commend the United Nations and its mine-action partners for their efforts to clear minefields and battlefields. Much has been achieved, but a great deal still needs to be done. We call on all donors to scale up their support for that important process.

Following the withdrawal of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in December 2014, Afghan security forces assumed responsibility for maintaining law and order in the country. That is a major challenge, considering the prevalent security situation. Terrorist groups have continued to launch attacks against civilians, using suicide bombers and improvised explosive devices. A case in point is the assassination of an Afghan police commander on 28 January, followed by a suicide attack during his funeral, which killed 15 people. Nigeria condemns, in the strongest terms, attacks by terrorist groups. The insurgents should lay down their arms and respond positively to President Ghani's offer of inclusive peace talks.

We commend the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Nicholas Haysom and the staff of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for their tireless efforts to carry out the Mission's mandate. UNAMA's engagement with the Government of Afghanistan remains vital at this crucial period in Afghanistan's transition to a peaceful, stable and prosperous country. That is why Nigeria supported the extension of the Mission's mandate, as expressed in resolution 2210 (2015), adopted this morning. We commend Spain, as penholder, for its leadership role in drafting that resolution.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We welcome and thank Special Representative, Nicholas Haysom, for introducing the Secretary-General's report on Afghanistan (S/2015/151*) and for the work that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is doing in carrying out its important mandate, which was entrusted to it by the Security Council on behalf of the international community. We also thank the Ambassador of Afghanistan for his remarks.

As we renew the United Nations Mission's mandate, ensuring the maintenance of cooperation between the United Nations and Afghanistan in the critical political, social and economic processes underway, this debate affords an opportunity to take stock of the important political, security and social economic developments in Afghanistan — the closing of a cycle in Afghan life and the opening of the transformation period, with Afghanistan taking on the leadership and ownership of its national affairs.

We welcome and hope that the reform agenda, aimed at realizing self-reliance, which was put forward by the Afghan leadership at the London Conference, will lead to a transformation in overcoming the great challenges that the country still faces as it struggles to achieve national reconciliation, stability, social development and sustainable peace.

The political agreement of 21 September and the establishment of a Government of national unity were a fundamental break-through in Afghan political life and a confirmation that political compromise is possible and relevant for the country's progress in achieving stability and, ultimately, peace. The Afghan leadership and ownership of the political process is based on the fulfilment of the benchmarks outlined in the Secretary-General's report, the attainment of which is vital in order to safeguard against the loss of all that has been achieved through the great and sustained efforts and investments by the Afghans and the international community.

Among those benchmarks, the first and foremost is security — with the creation of sustainable Afghan security institutions capable of ensuring the stability and protection of the people of Afghanistan. From the lessons learned in Iraq with the collapse of the Iraqi armed forces at the hands of terrorists from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) upon the withdrawal of the American forces, it would be wise to consider a review of the timeline for the drawdown of American

troops, which appears to be happening. NATO's Resolute Support Mission, which will provide training, advisors, and assistance to the Afghan security forces, is an element of the confidence-building measures aimed at strengthening the security situation in the country.

Reintegration and reconciliation through the development of national dialogue and regional engagement to foster a political environment conducive to peace is another policy objective to be met. The reintegration of a relatively large number of anti-Government elements, the efforts to counter the fundamentalism that fuels violence, the call to the Taliban to join the peace process, the pledge by President Ghani Ahmadzai to focus on establishing peace and other important political initiatives give the hope that the Afghans might be entering a new and decisive phase of their lives.

Governance and institution-building, the extension of State authority throughout the country and the establishment of democratic, legitimate and accountable institutions are other crucial policy objectives. The ability of the Afghan authorities to conduct the electoral process in 2014 was an important event, to be coupled with further electoral reforms, the development and empowerment of anti-corruption institutions, the strengthening of the transparency of the civil service and the establishment of a credible judicial and penal system. Respect for human rights, in line with the Constitution and international law, protecting civilians, improving the situation of women and girls, reducing the number of incidents and the lawful use of force to combat impunity are crucial processes for the attainment of sustainable peace in Afghanistan.

Economic and social development is a key purpose of a Government's policies, supported by the international community, in order to promote sustainable economic growth. With Afghanistan taking leadership and ownership of its national affairs, the partnership within the international community is intent on translating coherent support to Afghanistan, improving the coordination and the alignment of donor funding with national priority programmes.

Regional cooperation with sustained effective regional coordination in support of progress, peace and stability is another fundamental element in the new era Afghanistan is entering. We take note of the remarkable development of regional cooperation, the holding of important summit conferences and their outcomes. A number of regional initiatives within the framework of counter-terrorism financing, on countering drug trafficking and on trade, commerce and investment show how Afghanistan is effectively committed to a process of regional cooperation and to consolidating the country's role as a full and rightful member of the international community. Finally, countering narcotics — a critical area given that violence and crime stem from narcotics and it serves as a main financial source for the Taliban and the terrorists — decreasing poppy cultivation and increasing narcotics control, and, concurrently, the increase in licit agriculture, are key policies to be pursued by the Afghan Government.

In conclusion, we acknowledge the remarkable progress achieved by the Afghan people after the demise of the despicable Taliban regime. We also acknowledge the sustained commitment of the international community to Afghanistan. However, we must recognize that a long, hard and rocky road still lies ahead if Afghanistan is to achieve stability and peace. The fulfilment of the benchmarks detailed in the Secretary-General's report is a complex and demanding task that requires strong commitment by the Afghan people and authorities and by the international community, including the United Nations Mission in the medium term and, most probably, the long term, if the Afghan people are to secure social progress, freedom and lasting peace.

Mr. Barros Melet (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): We welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), Mr. Nicholas Haysom, and thank him for his briefing on the current situation in Afghanistan. We would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

Chile welcomes the progress achieved since our previous meeting on Afghanistan, held on 18 December (see S/PV.7347), and we welcome the start of the transformation decade 2015-2024. We welcome the goodwill that President Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah have shown in the process of forming the new Government. The stability achieved in the first months of the transitional Government made it possible to focus efforts on priority areas related to security and development in the country. We hope that the process of forming a Government will be completed without problems.

In that regard, we cannot fail to mention that one of the short-term priorities should be holding this year's parliamentary and municipal elections in an orderly and peaceful manner, with the active and broad participation of women. The consolidation of peace and national reconciliation are essential in this period. The Government's efforts to carry out a process that is owned and led by Afghans themselves require support from all of us. Civil society must play an active role in an inclusive peace process.

We recognize that Afghanistan continues to face enormous challenges to its stability, such as corruption, drug trafficking, terrorism and a humanitarian crisis. In that regard, we call on donor countries and international financial institutions to maintain their commitment to long-term development assistance, particularly in view of the sharp slowdown expected for the Afghan economy in the next few years.

We are concerned about the impact the security situation continues to have on the Afghan civilian population, particularly on children and women. The complex security situation — a product of terrorism and the fight against anti-Government elements — requires a comprehensive and coordinated response to ensure adequate protection for civilians. In that regard, the support and cooperation of regional and international partners continues to be important and necessary.

Given the critical time that Afghanistan is going through and the important role of UNAMA in supporting the Government, we favour the renewal of the Mission's mandate for 12 months. Likewise, we emphasize the evaluation process for the six-month period beginning on the date of the adoption of resolution 2210 (2015) to examine all the functions, structures and activities of all United Nations entities in Afghanistan. Finally, we thank Spain for all the work done to make it possible to submit the resolution approved today.

The President (*spoke in French*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as a representative of France.

I thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Haysom, for his briefing. I should also like to thank the Ambassador of Afghanistan, Mr. Tanin, for his statement.

I associate myself with the statement to be made by the observer of the European Union.

Afghanistan is writing a new page in its history. The 2014 presidential election was an important step in the country's political transition process and allowed for the first peaceful, democratic handover of power. France reiterates its support to the Afghan President, Mr. Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, and to the Chief Executive, Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, and to all new members of the new national unity Government. France welcomes the appointment of members of the national unity Government on 12 January and wants to see the follow-up to that process to ensure that the Government team will soon be fully staffed.

In addition, the security transition concluded in 2014 under satisfactory conditions. The NATO Resolute Support Mission advisory training services are helping the Afghan Security Forces, which are now responsible for security across the Afghan territory.

Afghanistan has now entered the transformation decade, which should result in the implementation of an ambitious reform programme. With its partners, France will continue to support the Government on the implementation of the reform plan presented during the London Conference on 4 December 2014. We stress the importance of the commitments undertaken under the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, which is to be revised this year.

However, the completion of the transition and the beginning of the transformation decade should not let us to forget that many challenges remain. In a fragile security context, the role of regional partners is essential for Afghanistan's stability. The initiatives taken to better secure the border are very positive. Regional support is also important to ensure that the process of national reconciliation can begin in order to guarantee the conditions for lasting peace in Afghanistan. France supports the efforts of the Afghan Government in that regard.

Furthermore, it is crucial that the mobilization of the Afghan authorities remain strong on the issue of countering drug trafficking. This is a concern for my country. We encourage the Afghan authorities to continue their efforts to combat the production and trafficking of drugs, which pose a real threat to the stability and development of the country and for the health of its people.

In that context, France believes that the role of the United Nations is more important than ever. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) embodies the will of the international community to continue to support Afghanistan, and we attach great

importance to the United Nations continuing to enjoy the necessary means to achieve that goal. We believe that, while the current mandate remains relevant, it will be useful in future to reflect on its evolution. In that regard, we welcome the invitation to reflect on its evolution set in resolution 2210 (2015), which we have adopted today.

In conclusion, I would like to commend the efforts of Mr. Haysom and the entire UNAMA team, which is working in difficult conditions. France is convinced that the United Nations will continue to play a decisive role in Afghanistan in the framework of the transformation decade, which is characterized by renewed support by Afghanistan's partners, with full respect for the principle of the country's sovereignty.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of India.

Mr. Mukerji (India): I hank you, Mr. President, for organizing this debate on the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I also thank the Secretary-General for his quarterly report (S/2015/151) and our briefers this morning.

This is a critical decade of transformation for Afghanistan. India is proud to call itself Afghanistan's first strategic partner. We share the Afghan people's vision of a strong, independent, united and prosperous State, for which so many Afghans have sacrificed so much. India stands ready to do all that is possible within our capacities and means to work with the Afghan Government and its people to realize that great vision.

Afghanistan's historic political transition remains on course. The patience, forbearance, courage and democratic aspiration of the people of Afghanistan have strengthened that process. A priority is to complete the task of Government formation as rapidly as possible so that all Government ministries can start functioning normally. The ministries have to deliver the public services that the Afghan people have been waiting for for so long. In that context, we welcome the appointments of some of the key ministers, and express India's hope that the remaining process will be completed as soon as possible.

We note that the national unity Government has set itself two important political tasks: lectoral reforms and the organization of a constitutional loya jirga. We hope that those tasks will be completed soon, particularly the task of electoral reforms.

We are concerned at what the latest report of the Secretary-General tells us about the security situation inside Afghanistan. The report states,

> "In terms of incidents recorded over the past 13 years, 2014 was the second-highest, after 2011." (*S/2015/151, para. 12*)

That, of course, was the year when Osama Bin Laden was neutralized. Those incidents are a matter of great concern.

The Secretary-General's report substantiates our view that it is terrorism, and not tribal differences or ethnic rivalries, that is the main source of insecurity and instability in Afghanistan. Terrorist groups, including the Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, are active despite the efforts of the valiant personnel of the Afghan National Security Forces and the international coalition forces. It is obvious that their activity cannot be sustained without systematic State support from beyond Afghanistan's borders. Reports indicate terrorist groups are mutating into more virulent forms, in a region already impacted by terrorism. The Council must act against that threat with a sense of urgency.

The Secretary-General's report mentions the London Conference on Afghanistan. In today's global economic situation, when the feeling of aid fatigue exists in most traditional donor countries, Afghanistan's economic transition will have to be also supported by a private-sector-led process. President Ghani has taken a lead on issues of connectivity, and we welcome and encourage all members of the international community to reciprocate that step in full measure.

As a lead country of the trade, commerce and investment confidence-building measure under the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process, India has gained appropriate experience on this issue. Both Afghanistan's lack of connectivity to sea ports as well as to the faster growing economic regions of Asia are major constraints for private sector investment in Afghanistan.

India, Afghanistan and Iran are examining how the existing port of Chabahar in Iran can be developed to help Afghanistan connect with the outside world. India has unilaterally offered Afghanistan access to Attari on our side of the India-Pakistan international border for Afghan trucks and goods that until now have transit rights only up to Wagah on the Pakistan

side. The implementation of that offer would provide Afghanistan significant access to one of the fastest growing economic markets in our region. The proposed motor vehicles agreement of our regional organization, the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, would further facilitate the movement of goods and people from Afghanistan.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan must continue to play a leading role in shaping and coordinating the international community's efforts to assist Afghanistan's political and economic reconstruction process. UNAMA must also focus on the important role it plays in ensuring the delivery of valuable humanitarian and development assistance to Afghanistan. The recent avalanches in the northern regions of Afghanistan only underscore the importance of this point.

Finally, we reiterate our commitment to stay the course in Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Pakistan.

Ms. Lodhi (Pakistan): It is an honour to make my maiden statement in the Security Council on the vital issue of Afghanistan and under your skilled presidency, Mr. President.

We thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/151). We welcome the perceptive briefing by Special Representative of the Secretary-General Nicholas Haysom, whom we had the pleasure of receiving recently in Islamabad. I also welcome the statement of Ambassador Tanin.

The renewal of the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) today comes at a defining moment for Afghanistan — a moment of hope for its people and the entire region. Pakistan has welcomed the peaceful transition in Afghanistan and the formation of the national unity Government, led by President Ashraf Ghani. Pakistan wholeheartedly endorses his decade of transformation and the programme for effective governance, economic and social development and national reconciliation.

President Ghani's historic visit to Islamabad last November and his talks with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif succeeded in overcoming in three days the accumulated challenges of 13 years and produced a strategic shift in Pakistan-Afghan relations. The leaders of the two countries share a vision of a partnership built on multiple pillars of common security and economic interests. They have committed not to allow their respective territories to be used against each other. They have initiated actions to intensify security cooperation, promote bilateral trade, streamline transit trade and forge a close economic relationship. Renewed interaction in the military and intelligence sphere has strengthened mutual confidence.

We are working to strengthen border controls and cooperation. Pakistan's Zarb-e-Azb military operation, which is under way right now, is targeting all terrorist groups without distinction. Afghanistan's cooperation against terrorists targeting Pakistan is greatly appreciated by Islamabad.

The security challenges confronting Afghanistan remain imposing. As anticipated, violence has escalated. The Taliban will no doubt test the mettle of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). The ANSF will need to demonstrate to them that a military solution is not possible. The new Afghan Government has called for a dialogue to resolve differences through political means. There are encouraging indications that the Taliban may be willing to negotiate with the national unity Government. We hope it will join the reconciliation process. It is for the Afghan Government to set out the terms and framework for such reconciliation. The international community should actively support that process, and Pakistan will do everything possible to facilitate it.

We welcome China's closer engagement in promoting reconciliation and economic development in Afghanistan. But as the Secretary-General warns in his report, the process of achieving peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan is not likely to be fast or smooth. The Afghan parties and the international community must exercise strategic patience. Those who desire to disrupt the peace process should be discouraged. They are on the wrong side of history.

Security and development are interdependent. A priority aim must be to break the nexus between drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism. We share the Secretary-General's concern about the deterioration in the Afghan economy. Short-term measures for economic revival should be accompanied by steps designed to lay the foundations for self-sustained growth. The road, rail and trans-regional energy projects envisaged by Pakistan and Afghanistan will contribute to creating that foundation.

The Afghan refugees in Pakistan, still the largest single-country refugee population anywhere in the world, can make a valuable contribution to Afghanistan's economic revival. We welcome President Ghani's resolve to bring them home and provide a road map to do so within a specified time frame. UNAMA should give priority to assisting the process of refugee repatriation and resettlement. Its core work in capacity-building and supporting the Afghan Government in coordinating assistance and in reconstruction, socioeconomic growth and good offices remains vital.

The destinies of the peoples of Pakistan and Afghanistan are inextricably linked by geography, history, culture, language and faith. Such ties cannot be cut or rent asunder by the tides of power or politics. For the past 35 years, the people of my country have shared in the suffering and tragedies of the Afghan people. Now, with the dawn of hope, we look forward, God willing, to sharing in the triumph of peace and development in Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Germany.

Mr. Braun (Germany): I would like to start by thanking Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing today and for his dedicated work. I would also like to acknowledge Ambassador Zahir Tanin's presence in the Security Council today.

Afghanistan's Government of national unity has embarked upon a comprehensive reform strategy that was presented by President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah to Afghanistan's international partners at the London Conference on Afghanistan in December. Under the motto "Realizing Self-reliance", their agenda sets out an ambitious programme of reforms in many key areas, among them fighting corruption, promoting good governance, restoring fiscal sustainability and promoting economic growth and private-sector investment, as well as strengthening the rule of law and protecting and promoting human rights, particularly women's rights.

The reform agenda will build on the achievements made during the past decade. Life expectancy has increased from 45 to 60, and maternal mortality has been almost halved. Today, of a total of 9 million students attending school, almost 4 million are girls. Thousands of kilometres of roads have been built, access to electricity has doubled and many Afghans communicate by mobile phone. A vibrant civil society has assumed the role of guardian of hard-earned freedoms and rights. Those are only a few examples of the real progress the Afghan people have seen.

At the same time, tremendous challenges remain. The Afghan Government will have to pursue further economic reforms and fiscal sustainability on the one hand, and protect and promote human rights and strengthen the rule of law, on the other. Refreshing the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework is a cornerstone of that process. The Government of Afghanistan is currently engaged with its partners in setting out new priorities that can put Afghanistan firmly on a path of self-reliance. That process must continue. Germany, which assists Afghanistan to the tune of almost half a billion dollars annually, is one of its largest donors and will continue to contribute actively to that process. One result is already certain, however. The international community, including Germany, will stay the course and continue to support Afghanistan during its transformation decade.

Swiftly forming a new Cabinet will be a pivotal first step in successfully addressing the reform backlog that has built up over the past few months. Germany therefore urges that Afghanistan finalize the process as soon as possible, while at the same time ensuring that women are adequately represented in the Cabinet. In that context, Germany commends the Afghan leadership's efforts to strengthen links and cooperation with its regional neighbours, including within the framework of the Heart of Asia process. Progress in economic and security cooperation will be mutually beneficial. Germany therefore calls on all stakeholders to redouble their efforts to make the transformation decade a success story for Afghanistan, the region and beyond.

A continued strong role for the United Nations Assistance Mission (UNAMA) will be critical to bringing about success. Germany therefore welcomes the extension of the mission's mandate for another 12 months. The mandate sets the right priorities and will enable the close and trusting cooperation that exists between the Government of Afghanistan, the Mission and the international community to continue. Protecting and promoting human rights, strengthening the coordination and efficiency of the international community's support to Afghanistan, and support to the Afghan authorities in implementing their commitments under the Tokyo Framework require a strong United

Nations Mission with adequate resources and a presence throughout the country.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the work of the Special Representative and his team. Under difficult circumstances, the United Nations continues to do great work in the service of the Afghan people. Germany will continue to support UNAMA in its fulfilment of its mandate.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Sweden.

Mr. Skoog (Sweden): Sweden aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the observer of the European Union.

I would first like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/151) and Special Representative Haysom for his briefing on the current situation and for the excellent work he has done in Afghanistan. I would also like to acknowledge Ambassador Tanin's statement.

Sweden expresses its support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and for the extension of its mandate. A continued United Nations presence, particularly in those parts of the country that are otherwise left unattended, remains vital. This year will be critical for Afghanistan. The Afghan people's expectations of the Government remain very high. Sweden therefore welcomes the strong commitment and willingness to reform shown by the national unity Government. The proposed reform agenda of "Realizing Self-reliance" shows Afghanistan's readiness to take on current challenges, although it is critical that the agenda be translated into concrete results. In order for the Government to fulfil its commitments to its citizens and to implement reforms, a full Cabinet must be nominated and approved as soon as possible.

Sweden remains committed to supporting Afghanistan's development towards becoming a democratic, secure and prosperous State. We have been assisting it for more than 30 years. Afghanistan is in fact one of the largest recipients of Swedish development aid. We intend to commit $1.2 billion to it over the transformation decade. Our focus is primarily on strengthening Afghanistan's own ability to improve the economy, enhancing democratic governance, promoting equality and improving the human-rights situation particularly for women and children. Sweden contributes to the Resolute Support Mission with the aim of training, advising and assisting the Afghan National Security Forces. We also provide support to the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan.

The consolidation of democracy in Afghanistan continues. The recent elections as well as a vibrant and active civil society, often driven by the youth, are proof of that. Yet, for democracy to fully take root, institutions need to be functioning and adequate legal parameters need to be in place. Sweden welcomes the commitment by the national unity Government to implement necessary reforms of the electoral system prior to the Parliamentary and District Council elections. The responsibility rests with the Afghan Government, but we stand ready to advise, assist and support.

The human-rights situation, particularly the situation for Afghan women and girls, remains of serious concern to us. The principle of equality must be promoted. That calls for a higher proportion of women in senior government positions and conditions that allow women to become equal members throughout all levels of society.

An end to impunity will require serious reforms of Afghan institutions, especially of the justice system, and corruption is a critical obstacle to development and must be combated at all times. The record high number of civilian casualties reported by UNAMA in 2014 is appalling. The dire humanitarian consequences of the conflict underline the immediate need for finding a peaceful solution.

We welcome the commitment of the Afghan leadership to making progress in the peace process. An inclusive approach is the only way forward. The opportunity to provide women with a stronger role in that process should be grasped. While the peace process needs to be Afghan-led and Afghan-owned, the international community stands ready to assist.

The challenges in Afghanistan cannot be tackled in isolation from the regional context. Recent attempts to increase cooperation and build further trust are commendable and should be encouraged. A stable and prosperous Afghanistan creates potential for the entire region. The production and smuggling of narcotics is an area where regional cooperation really could make a substantial difference. In that respect it will be crucial to maintain the momentum in regional processes such as the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process.

In conclusion, as we know the challenges for Afghanistan are many; tackling them will require continued assistance from the international community. UNAMA and other United Nations agencies have played and will continue to play an indispensable role. We look forward to continuing our cooperation with the Afghan Government in making its vision for the country come true.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ioannis Vrailas, Deputy Head of the Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations.

Mr. Vrailas: I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU) and its member States. The candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania; the country of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Georgia align themselves with this statement.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2015/151), Special Representative Haysom for his briefing and Ambassador Tanin for his statement.

Let me start by reiterating the EU's full support for the continued important role played by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and all of the United Nations agencies in supporting the Afghan people, and in coordinating the international community's assistance. Since the completion of the International Security Assistance Force's mission, the role of the United Nations is now even more important in assisting the national unity Government to implement its priorities. In that regard, it also remains important that the Mission maintain a countrywide presence. The successful implementation of reforms has an important part to play in underpinning the continued unity of the Government and a continued unity of purpose. That can ensure that gains made in the past 13 years are safeguarded and used as the foundation for further progress.

The EU welcomes the lead taken by the national unity Government in renewing momentum towards the initiation of an inclusive peace process. A meaningful peace process has the potential to be transformative in enabling Afghans to believe in an Afghanistan that can fully meet their legitimate aspirations for a more prosperous and more secure life.

But a peace deal should not come at any price. Afghans were relieved to hear President Ghani Ahmadzai's words that the price of peace must not be greater than the price of war. The EU fully supports the national unity Government in that endeavour. It is imperative that Afghanistan never again be the base from which terrorist groups operate.

We must also protect the gains made by Afghan women since the fall of the Taliban regime, as their active involvement in rebuilding the State remains crucial. In that regard, the EU would like to emphasize the need for the full implementation of resolution 1325 (2000). The EU has previously raised the issue of the central and critical role of women in all spheres of life in Afghanistan. As the High Representative recently said on the occasion of International Woman's Day, on 8 March, "Women make the difference." We therefore wish to see women actively involved in the negotiations on the future of their country.

The EU welcomes the more positive atmosphere now existing in regional relations. Credit must go to President Ghani Ahmadzai and the other leaders in the region for their endeavours to build links and cooperation among their countries. The EU knows from its own experience that greater security and prosperity are interlinked.

The Central and South Asian regions remain among the least integrated in the world. Increased cooperation has the potential to benefit all countries in the region. The cooperation structures that develop from those processes will offer the possibility of deepened relationships and increased interdependence, thereby enabling a shared and structured approach to resolving differences of opinion.

The EU is a strong supporter of the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process and other processes that are owned by the countries in the region. They need to be reinvigorated. The full implementation of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement and other agreements can also play a valuable role in stimulating economic activity along vital economic and transport arteries. In turn, increased economic activity can offer increased economic opportunities to those living in insecure areas.

In conclusion, peace and security in Afghanistan are the heartfelt desire of the Afghan people. The EU will work with and support the national unity Government during this difficult transformation period and calls

upon it to further promote an inclusive dialogue on reconciliation and political participation with all members of society. Lasting peace can only come with the constructive engagement of all neighbouring countries. The EU will work with the leading members of the international community to support that outcome. UNAMA's role in promoting peace and security for all Afghans will be a vital one, and we reiterate its importance.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Italy.

Mr. Lambertini (Italy) (*spoke in French*): I am very happy to take the floor under your presidency, Sir. Unfortunately I am not able to do so in French. I will therefore speak in English today and perhaps next time I will speak in French.

(*spoke in English*)

I wish to thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom and Ambassador Tanin for their statements. I also stress that Italy aligns itself with the statement just made by the observer of the European Union and wishes to add some remarks in its national capacity.

Allow me to begin by expressing our appreciation, as others have done, for the work of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and by voicing Italy's support for the renewal of its mandate, because of the actions it has carried out and its fundamental contribution towards coordinating the international community's actions in support of Afghanistan and the common goal of achieving peace and sustainable development in the country.

I wish to underline the precious added value provided by UNAMA during the troubled election season of last year, which concluded with the formation of a national unity Government and the first democratic transfer of power in Afghan history.

The completion of the International Security Assistance Force's mission and the hand-over of responsibility for security to the Afghan forces — in the framework of a fruitful collaboration with NATO and other countries, which continues today through the Resolute Support Mission — confirm the importance of UNAMA's future role and activities.

The challenges facing Afghanistan remain considerable, in particular as regards the security situation. We cannot, in fact, ignore the gravity of the situation revealed by the report prepared by UNAMA, in collaboration with the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. The report indicates a 22 per cent increase in civilian victims in Afghanistan in 2014 over the previous year. Those are extremely disturbing figures that make it imperative to achieve peace in the country.

In that perspective, the developments in the relations between Afghanistan and other regional players are positive. The close collaboration among the countries of the area is decisive in attaining peace and stability, not only in Afghanistan, but throughout the region.

But the focus on the hoped-for process of domestic reconciliation, in its Afghan-led and Afghan-owned dimension, should not lead to any backtracking on the gains made in democracy and civil rights, particularly the civil rights of women, or to any concessions to terrorism. These gains represent a legacy that must not only be defended but also further consolidated.

Italy stands alongside the national unity Government and its leadership, to which we lend our full support, and we back its efforts to ensure peace, security and prosperity for the country and the people. That is what inspires our participation in the Resolute Support Mission, in particular in the western region of the country, and that is the goal of our cooperation assistance, in the framework of a long-term commitment on the part of Italy and the international community as a whole to benefit Afghanistan.

This partnership is based on the principle of reciprocal commitments, as affirmed in Tokyo and reiterated last December in London, which require a resolute pursuit of reforms in the country in the areas of the democratic and electoral processes, the fight against corruption, administrative and economic governance, and human rights, particularly the human rights of women, which are prerequisites to enabling Afghanistan to progress resolutely on the road to democratic consolidation and self-sustainable social and economic development.

This is a challenging responsibility, but it is also unavoidable. That is why it is so important to complete the Government team at the central and local levels. We hope that this will take place soon, so as to enable the Government to effectively deploy its efforts to

concretely implement reforms and achieve the hoped-for results. We are convinced that, for this action to be successful, the role of UNAMA continues to be crucial. That is yet another reason why Italy supports the renewal of its mandate.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Japan.

Mr. Okamura (Japan) (*spoke in French*): I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to France for having convened today's important meeting.

(*spoke in English*)

I would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for his detailed briefing and Ambassador Tanin for his remarks.

Furthermore, I would like to join other Member States in welcoming today's adoption of resolution 2210 (2015), which renews the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would like to extend my sincere congratulations to Ambassador Oyarzun Marchesi and the Permanent Mission of Spain for their leadership in the renewal process.

This year Afghanistan will embark on its path towards self-reliance through the transformation decade. We welcome the strong determination and capacity that the Government and the people of Afghanistan have shown in addressing the important challenges that the country faces. Afghanistan, nevertheless, does not stand alone. The Tokyo and London Conferences have reiterated that the international community stands ready to continue its support for Afghanistan, under the concept of mutual accountability.

The extension of UNAMA's mandate is testimony to the international community's commitment to Afghanistan. Japan expects that UNAMA, as an embodiment of the international community's engagement with Afghanistan, will continue to play an important role in supporting the Afghan-led political process and the country's socioeconomic development.

The first democratic transition of power marked a watershed in Afghanistan's pursuit of self-reliance. We look to the national unity Government, under the guidance of, and with cooperation between, President Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah, to successfully implement its ambitious reform programme. It is regrettable, however, that a full cabinet has yet to be formed six months after an agreement was reached. We reiterate our call on the new leadership to form an inclusive national unity Government that can tackle the challenges that the country faces.

In this regard, I would like to touch upon three points of particular importance as Afghanistan embarks on its transformation decade, namely, first, strengthening governance and institution-building; secondly, advancing political reconciliation; and, thirdly and lastly, laying the foundation for sustainable economic development.

First, we believe that strengthening governance and institution-building will be fundamental to achieving self-reliance. A critical component of this is the strengthening of Afghanistan's own security forces. With the conclusion of the International Security Assistance Force, the Afghan Government is now called upon to take full responsibility for security and public order. We are therefore concerned at the recent increase in terrorism and civilian casualties. To this effect, Japan will continue to help reinforce Afghanistan's law-enforcement capacity. Our assistance in this area will be carried out principally through the Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan, to which Japan has hitherto contributed more than $1 billion.

In the light of the importance of maintaining security, we hope that Afghanistan and international donors will be able to agree on a form of management for the Fund that is reliable and acceptable to all parties involved, via constructive dialogue.

Secondly, political reconciliation is crucial for Afghanistan's long-term stability. In that light, Japan values the Afghan Government's efforts in leading the Afghan-led process towards peace, reintegration and reconciliation. Japan also welcomes Afghanistan's increased cooperation with regional partners, which is conducive to peace. Japan, for its part, will continue to support the reintegration of ex-combatants by providing vocational training and promoting job creation in such key sectors as agriculture.

Thirdly, we note with concern the recent economic slowdown. This affects not only Government revenues but also the welfare of ordinary Afghan citizens. Hence it is all the more crucial for Afghanistan to achieve a strong, endogenous and sustainable economy. The development of infrastructure and human resources would underpin this objective.

Strengthening the agricultural sector is also important owing to its large potential for job creation. To that end, Japan has provided assistance to reinforce Afghanistan's infrastructure and facilitate its integration into the global economy. This includes, inter alia, our assistance for the rehabilitation and expansion of Kabul International Airport, the reinforcement of land routes with neighbouring countries, and the rehabilitation of irrigation facilities in rural areas.

Furthermore, through initiatives such as the Promotion and Enhancement of the Afghan Capacity for Effective Development, Japan is helping train Afghan officials who will lead the country's economic development through and beyond the transformation decade.

It is said that a journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step. We are confident that the millions of Afghans who made their historic voices heard last September will, along with the Government of national unity, cement the foundations for a stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

As testimony to Japan's solidarity with Afghanistan, the Japanese Government has decided to disburse an additional $242 million before the end of this month. We hope that this will reinforce Afghanistan's first steps into the decade of transformation. Japan, along with the international community, stands ready to accompany Afghanistan on its path towards reform and self-reliance.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Turkey.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): At the outset, I should like to express our appreciation to the French presidency for having convened this meeting. I should like also to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (S/2015/151); his Special Representative, Mr. Nicholas Haysom, for his briefing; and Ambassador Zahir Tanin for his statement.

Afghanistan stands at a crucial juncture in its political, security and economic transformation. We welcome the continuation of the transition processes in the country. However, the significant gains of the past years, including in the fields of security, democracy, governance, capacity- and institution-building, economic development and human rights, have not yet passed the point of no return. The launch of the transformation decade calls for enhanced efforts to consolidate the achievements in these fields.

The international community's continuing support remains vital for a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan that can effectively meet the needs of its people. The steps and messages we take now will have an immense impact on the way in which the next decade will unfold. We therefore attach particular importance to the need for all parties to refrain from mentioning any misguiding dates, which would imply the drawing down of the international community's commitment to Afghanistan at an early stage incompatible with the situation and requirements on the ground.

Resolution 2210 (2015), renewing the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), is timely, when change and transformation dominate the agenda of Afghanistan. We believe that the comprehensive role assumed by UNAMA in assisting the Afghan people to achieve a bright future is of utmost importance. Turkey will continue to support UNAMA's activities and efforts in this regard.

The national unity Government's resolve in carrying Afghanistan forward should be commended. We welcome and support the robust reform agenda the Afghan leadership has embarked upon, including in the fields of governance, the rule of law and the fight against corruption, as well as its efforts for an Afghan-led and -owned reconciliation process. The international community's support to the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan, with full respect for the principles of Afghan leadership, ownership and sovereignty, will be particularly important.

The issue of civilian casualties continues to be a source of grave concern in Afghanistan. Regrettably, 2014 saw a 22 per cent increase in the number of civilian casualties compared with the previous year. We believe that addressing this issue should remain among the top priorities of our common agenda.

Furthermore, we condemn the terrorist attacks perpetrated in the country since the Security Council's last debate on Afghanistan in December 2014 (see S/PV.7347), including an attack carried out against a Turkish Embassy vehicle in Kabul last month, which claimed the life of one member of the Turkish Armed Forces personnel and wounded another. We reiterate our conviction that those who perpetrate such attacks will not achieve their goals of dragging Afghanistan

into instability and confirm that we will always stand by Afghanistan in its struggle against terrorism.

The Secretary-General's report underscores in its paragraph 54 that "peace remains the fundamental precondition to durable and sustained political and economic progress in Afghanistan". In fact, a successful, Afghan-led and inclusive reconciliation process would serve to eliminate the obstacles impeding social, political and economic development.

Furthermore, at a time of transformation, the importance of regional cooperation and commitment becomes all the more relevant. We welcome all bilateral and multilateral dialogue and cooperation efforts to this end. With this understanding, we also welcome the increased momentum that has been achieved through the Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process. Concrete projects emerging from increased cooperation will facilitate economic development, stability and self-sustainability in the region.

Turkey remains committed to standing by the people of Afghanistan in this transition process, including in the fields of security and development. In addition to Turkey's financial commitments for the funding of the Afghan National Security Forces, Turkey has assumed the framework nation role for Kabul in the new Resolute Support Mission.

The international community's solidarity and continued commitment will strengthen the hopes of the Afghan people for a bright future. Turkey will continue to contribute to a secure, stable and prosperous Afghanistan.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. Khoshroo (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to express my appreciation to you, Sir, for holding this debate on the situation in Afghanistan. I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin of Afghanistan for his statement and Mr. Nicholas Haysom, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), for his report (S/2015/151).

The Islamic Republic of Iran, with its deep cultural and historical ties to Afghanistan, has always supported peace, stability, security and socioeconomic development in Afghanistan. To us, security in Afghanistan is tantamount to security on our borders and in our region.

Iran was among the first to welcome the formation of the national unity Government in Afghanistan, with Mr. Ashraf Ghani as its President and Mr. Abdullah as its Chief Executive. Having assumed full leadership, Afghanistan has now embarked on a very crucial path of transformation. The strong and visionary leadership taken by the new Government will address current challenges in a sustainable, strategic and consistent manner. We are confident that the national unity Government is best positioned to face the major challenges of peace and development.

The latest Secretary-General's report on Afghanistan, which indicates a possible increase in armed attacks and violence in the coming summer season, should be a matter of deep concern to us and all countries in the region. Insecurity, instability and poverty provide the most fertile of ground for the rapid growth and re-emergence of violent extremist groups and even footholds for the Islamic State in Iraq and the Sham in Afghanistan, as Special Representative Haysom mentioned today.

Unfortunately, the report shows that the number of terrorist acts has increased during the recent months. We condemn all violent attacks committed by these terrorist groups as well as any cooperation with them, which we believe would embolden them in their odious behaviour and be counterproductive to establishing peace in Afghanistan.

On the important question of security arrangements and the activities of the foreign troops, including through the Resolute Support Mission, we believe that such activities should be carried out with the full consent and in constant consultation with the Government. This is a vital requirement to demonstrate the strong commitment of the international community to respecting the sovereignty, independence, territorial integrity and national unity of Afghanistan.

On bilateral cooperation, Iran's Minister for Foreign Affairs visited Kabul on 20 January and discussed issues of common interest, such as security cooperation and establishing bilateral strategic cooperation. That visit was preceded by the 15 December signing in Tehran of a memorandum of understanding by the Commander of the Iranian Border Guards and his Afghan counterpart to enhance cooperation in countering terrorism and drug trafficking. Iran stands ready to increase its

bilateral cooperation, in particular on security matters, counter-narcotics efforts, developing projects and economic cooperation in the fields of infrastructure and agriculture, as well as seeking a durable solution for Afghan refugees.

There is also great potential to explore in the fields of trade and transit. Completing the railroad project between Harat and Khaf city in Iran and Iran's readiness to make available its port facilities in Chah Bahar are two ongoing examples in this regard. The tripartite agreement between India, Afghanistan and Iran needs to be finalized in order to move forward with the subjects addressed in that agreement.

On the counter-narcotics efforts, we are particularly concerned about the reports indicating that opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan has almost doubled since 2012. It is a real threat for the region and beyond and should be addressed by the international community. We welcome the regional initiatives taken by countries in the region, including China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Iran, to that end.

The strong support and commitment of the international donors, Afghan authorities and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime is essential to efforts to deter those who would engage in drug cultivation and drug trafficking. That is not only a major public health challenge, but also, and more importantly, a major source of income for extremist and terrorist groups. Thus, the international community should especially support the trilateral initiative on cooperation on countering narcotics by Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. It is a useful initiative that will benefit Afghanistan and transit and destination countries.

Millions of Afghan refugees continue to live in Iran. The drop in the rate of their voluntary repatriation underlines the importance of meeting the reasonable needs of repatriated refugees in Afghanistan in order to reverse that trend and underscores the need to mobilize more international support for the host countries of Afghan refugees pending their repatriation.

We support UNAMA and the United Nations agencies in their efforts to provide development and reconstruction assistance to Afghanistan through robust regional engagement on issues such as border security, immigration, the return of refugees and drug control measures. The role of UNAMA should be further strengthened in the light of the important political and socioeconomic developments in Afghanistan. The future involvement of UNAMA will be deepened and strengthened given its unique role and the multifaceted and increasingly complicated challenges it faces.

Let me conclude by expressing my best wishes to the people of Afghanistan on the occasion of our — and their — new year, Nowruz. I wish them peace and prosperity in the new year, which starts on the first day of spring.

The President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Australia.

Ms. Bird (Australia): I thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Haysom for his briefing and for his leadership of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Allow me also to acknowledge Afghanistan's Permanent Representative, Zahir Tanin, for his continued important contribution.

Australia is pleased that the Security Council has today unanimously renewed the UNAMA mandate for a further 12 months. As Afghanistan assumes full leadership of its affairs, the United Nations continues to play a central role in leading international efforts to support Afghanistan during its transformation decade, including through good offices, donor coordination, and human rights and humanitarian assistance.

The year 2015 marks the beginning of a new chapter in Afghanistan's history. For the first time since the days of the Taliban, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are responsible for securing the country. The new Government of national unity, led by President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah, has committed itself to an ambitious programme of reform.

The 13-year-long International Security Assistance Force mission to Afghanistan concluded at the end of 2014 and has now been followed by the NATO-led non-combat Resolute Support Mission, which is training, advising and assisting the ANSF. Australia is contributing military personnel to Resolute Support and $100 million per year until 2017 to sustaining ANSF.

Civilian casualties remain a serious concern and have regrettably continued to increase over the past year. We thank UNAMA for its continued reporting on civilian casualties in Afghanistan.

The national unity Government has achieved a great deal in its first months, but Afghanistan's economy and Government finances remain a serious concern. We welcome President Ghani's ambitious vision for

reform, set out in his paper entitled "Realizing Self-reliance". We also applaud the Afghan Government's steps to combat corruption, especially steps to review the fraud charges against the Kabul Bank and recent steps to reduce leakages in Afghanistan's Customs and Revenue Departments. We look forward to receiving the action plan for implementing the priorities outlined in the Afghan Government's "Realizing Self-reliance" paper.

Electoral reform, drawing on the lessons from the two rounds of voting in 2014, will help build a democracy that Afghans can be proud of. Australia welcomed President Ghani's commitment to electoral reform, including the planned Electoral Reform Commission. We urge the Afghan Government to take that forward as a priority. We also encourage the Afghan Government to appoint a full and inclusive Cabinet when the Afghan Parliament sits again after the winter recess.

Afghanistan has made enormous progress in key areas of human development since 2001. The challenge for the Afghan Government now will be to protect the gains of the past 14 years, particularly when it comes to basic-service delivery, such as health and education.

Australia also looks to the Afghan Government to continue to work to improve the place of women and girls in Afghan society. We have welcomed the renewed commitment by the Afghan Government to the rights of women and girls, including steps towards implementing the national action plan on women, peace and security. Full implementation of the action plan and the Elimination of Violence against Women law must be priorities.

Achieving a political settlement with the Taliban will set the foundation for a lasting peace for Afghanistan and its region. The Government of national unity has made impressive progress in strengthening regional relationships, which is a critical first step towards creating the preconditions for formal talks between the Afghan Government and the Taliban. The prospects for peace are promising. We urge Afghanistan and its partners to continue to approach reconciliation with a sense of purpose and pragmatism.

The President (*spoke in French*): I give the floor to the representative of Slovakia.

Mr. Ružička (Slovakia): Slovakia would first like to align itself with the statement delivered earlier on behalf of the European Union (EU).

I would also like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (S/2015/151) and welcome the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Nicholas Haysom. I thank him for his briefing and wish him every success in his new appointment. We are keeping our fingers crossed for his mission, and we are sure it will be successful. Slovakia will continue to offer full support to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). I would also like to thank Ambassador Tanin for his statement and for his ongoing activities to bring about a brighter future for his country.

Slovakia welcomes the fact that Afghanistan entered its transformation decade at the beginning of 2015, having assumed full leadership and ownership of its national affairs. We note with appreciation the mutually respectful nature of the relations between Afghan leaders President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah and their teams. That approach is the only way forward in addressing the country's challenges in a sustainable, strategic and cohesive manner.

I would like to touch upon the various challenges that Afghanistan is facing.

Despite the volatile nature of its security situation, Afghanistan is not alone. There is now the Resolute Support Mission, which is an entirely new element based on new foundations. As set forth in Security Council resolution 2189 (2014), adopted by this body in December 2014, that non-combat, training, advisory and assistance operation will work in close coordination with the Government of Afghanistan. I am proud that my country is a part of it. We must also recognize the work done by the civilian EU Police Mission in Afghanistan, which is focused on police training and the rule of law and to which Slovakia also contributes. All of those engagements contribute to a better security-sector environment and should be fully supported by all the main stakeholders.

With regard to political developments, Afghan leaders can fully rely on the support of the international community, including Slovakia. However, the most prominent support can and will only come from the Afghan people, and it is up to their representatives to earn their trust and credibility by leading by example. We encourage all steps towards increased internal stabilization, including sound political leadership in the parliamentary elections process and the reform agenda. The process of reconciliation is a fundamental

prerequisite to sustainable development in Afghanistan. We encourage Afghan leaders to inspire their fellow politicians and other potential candidates in Kabul, as well as in other regions, to conduct an ambitious schedule of elections and reforms.

Economic, financial and budgetary reforms are perhaps the most challenging area of reform to promote peaceful development. And I think that the people of Slovakia have really already confirmed that, because over the past 20 years, the country has gone through substantive economic reforms. As I have stressed before, Afghanistan is not alone and Slovakia, together with other countries and organizations, wishes to continue its development assistance programmes. But from our own national experience, foreign aid can only help to overcome the difficult problems of the initial phase of a country's transformation. The most important, and at the same time challenging and painful, part of the process is deep structural reform. It is essential in order to encourage foreign private investors and develop domestic small and medium enterprises. Again on this point, Slovakia is ready to offer its own experience with transformation at any time if requested.

In connection with regional cooperation, we have taken note, with appreciation, of increased positive engagement on the part of neighbours of Afghanistan, complementing Afghan efforts to strengthen regional relations. Their support is critical and essential, especially in addressing cross-border threats, like counter-narcotics efforts and the illicit trafficking of drugs.

Slovakia fully supports a free and democratic Afghanistan. We support its economic and social development in accordance with the traditions and wishes of its people. Afghan leaders — including President Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah — have offered their people vision and hope. We are pleased that the reform plan also tackles the areas of the protection of civilians, the situation of women and girls, freedom of expression and accountability based on the rule of law.

The accent on the necessity of economic reforms in my statement is not accidental. The growth of the illicit economy can severely undermine the Government's efforts, negatively affect the individual and collective business endeavours of Afghan citizens and ultimately spoil the momentum of building an unprecedented, qualitatively better future for Afghanistan. I am convinced that the Afghan Administration is aware of that challenge, and we are looking forward to working closely with Kabul, should our assistance be desired. I remain positive and encouraged — again thanks to Special Representative Haysom and the whole UNAMA team, who continue in their remarkable performance. And let me wish to all the Afghan people a very successful year with new hopes and perspectives.

The President (*spoke in French*): There are no more names inscribed on the list of speakers.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.